

THE *AMAZING* LISTS ISSUE | OUR DEFINITIVE RANKINGS THAT YOU'RE SURE TO AGREE WITH* (*or not)

The Hockey News

THE INSIDE
WORD ON
YOUR TEAM'S
TOP DRAFT
PICK

STARS ON THE MOVE

- > DOUGIE HAMILTON
- > PHIL KESSEL
- > MILAN LUCIC
- > BRANDON SAAD

INSTANT LEGENDS

ARE EICHEL & McDAVID DESTINED TO BE BEST DUO EVER?

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GAMBLES ON VEGAS

THE BROTHERS METROPOLIT | OUT OF THE PROJECTS AND INTO THE NHL...AND PRISON

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The Hockey News

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Connor McDavid and Jack Eichel will be special, but they have a lot of work to do to become the best 1-2 draft picks of all-time

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Whether Ekblad young or Jagr old, we've got it covered as we hand out our annual hardware and count down the best – and worst – from hockey present, past and future.



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SHOELESS BRO

Jiri Hudler airs out the old dogs behind the scenes at the NHL Awards. He didn't win the Messier Leadership Award on the left, but he did take home the Lady Byng Trophy.



ON THE COVER Jack Eichel and Connor McDavid by Jeff Vinnick/NHLI via Getty Images

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE BASE

If the NHL expands, how does it give the new clubs the right start without damaging the Original 30?



THERE ARE THREE THINGS DOMINATING NHL expansion chatter: location, location and, yes, location. We get it. The notion of where to place the league's next team(s) is sexy and emotional.

But the concept of growing the business by selling more franchises isn't all shifts and giggles. There are multiple considerations and potential ramifications. Success in any given market comes with as much certainty as an Alex Ovechkin guaranteed win.

The league's most recent forays paint a checkered picture. From 1998 to 2000, the NHL added four teams: Nashville, Atlanta (who high-tailed it to Winnipeg when things failed in Georgia), Minnesota and Columbus. In 59 combined seasons, the quartet has had 18 playoff appearances, about a 30 percent success rate. Overall, with other factors being equal, NHL teams today have a 53 percent chance of making it to mid-April. In those 18 appearances, the clubs have won a total of six rounds, four by the Wild and two by the Preds. None has won a Cup or made it to the final. Heck, the Thrashers/Jets have yet to win as much as a post-season game. In terms of the bottom line, all four are in the bottom half of Forbes' most recent franchise value report. The Wild are 17th, the Jets 20th, Nashville 24th and Columbus 29th.

This isn't to say expansion isn't a good idea or won't work. We believe the talent pool is deep enough to sustain a couple more teams, but filling out those rosters relatively equitably is a thorny proposition. Nothing breeds financial success more than winning. The league needs to figure out how to structure the expansion draft so the new teams have a fighting chance. If it's deemed they have to reach the salary floor immediately, the NHL will have to be more liberal in its expansion draft protection guidelines, which means the established clubs will have to make greater sacrifices. And what of the amateur draft and lottery? Where will the new kids slot in order to give them the best chance at quick growth, while not upsetting the old guard?

It's in the best interest of league business that any new franchises not become a drag on the bottom line. While the fees will be a nice bonus for the Original 30, revenue sharing and the slicing of TV monies are the flip side of the coin. And we know, more than anything else, this is about the coin. Oh, and location.

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OVER 140 YEARS UNDER THE HOOD

INSIDE HOCKEY



SIDNEY CROSBY & MARIO LEMIEUX

IT IS TIME FOR AN EVEN NEWER NHL?

The report card is in: evolution has caught up to some of the bold rule changes introduced 10 years ago

TEN YEARS AGO, INSTEAD OF being unveiled at a full arena, the best prospect in a generation was introduced to the hockey world in the ballroom of an Ottawa hotel. The 2005 lockout had just ended and the Corel Center (now the Canadian Tire Centre) couldn't accommodate the new

day for the NHL draft.

But that didn't blunt the excitement and anticipation of the New NHL, one that featured a ready-made superstar in Sidney Crosby, a salary cap to get the NHL's economics in order and a host of rule changes and enforcements to allow its offensive stars to shine. As Mario

Lemieux posed for pictures with Crosby, the Penguins' No. 1 pick, you could just envision him using the removed red line to spring Crosby for breakaway after breakaway.

For a while, the plan worked masterfully. After taking a year off, the NHL roared back in popularity. Ratings were up, attendance was up and the excitement was palpable.

How could the NHL have possibly kept up that pace? Well, pace hasn't been a problem. The league is faster and more chaotic than it has ever been. Over the years, though, scoring has decreased almost back to where we started. In 2003-04, the season before the lockout and the height of the Dead Puck Era, teams were producing an average of 5.12 goals per game. This past season, without factoring in the goal teams are awarded for winning a shootout, that average was just 5.32.

Many argue the evolution of the player has narrowed the gap so much between the best players and lesser ones that it's more difficult to create offense. Now, instead of having a fourth-line of enforcers and role players, teams have bottom-six forwards who can skate almost as well as the top-six forwards. And according to St. Louis Blues coach Ken Hitchcock, teams are actually playing far more reckless defensively than they ever have, challenging the puck carrier at every opportunity. "If you're a winger, there's a defenseman in your face every shift," Hitchcock said. "He's either in your face as you exit (your zone) or he's in your face in the neutral zone. So there's no space, no time."

Teams play a swarm defense in their own zone. They collapse in front of their net and block shots like never before. "It used to be that a shot blocker was a specialist," said Anaheim Ducks coach Bruce Boudreau. "Now, everybody blocks shots."

So is the New NHL still working? Or does the league need another round of sweeping changes? Let's look at the major changes and see where we stand 10 years later:

OBSTRUCTION CRACKDOWN

Entering 2005-06, the league vowed to crack down on the obstruction fouls that were slowing the game to a crawl, and it was hyper vigilant to start. Nobody could have expected it would continue at that pace, and it hasn't. There's more obstruction now than there was in 2005-06, though still far less than there was prior to that. "When we went to the final (with Carolina in 2002) and when we'd play the New Jersey Devils, oh my God, how are you selling that?" said Winnipeg Jets coach Paul Maurice. "The difference now is that everyone skates so well, and there's so much gap control. It's almost the Anton Stralman effect. These strong skating defensemen can close the gap so quickly. And I don't think we want to see that go away."

Some believe it was the obstruction crackdown that caused teams to close that gap and take the ice away. Players who would slow opponents down with restraining fouls have been replaced by those who do it with skating, hockey sense and body positioning.

And there's been at least one unintended consequence of the crackdown. "I worry about defensemen," said Dallas Stars GM Jim Nill. "I know when pucks are dumped in the corner and they go back, they have no protection at all. With the speed of the game and no obstruction, I just worry about the safety of the players." **GRADE: B**

REMOVAL OF THE RED LINE

In an effort to speed up the game and stretch out the ice, the NHL removed the red line, creating the stretch pass. But there are those who think it has sped the game up too much, especially in the neutral zone.

There were a lot of old-school coaches who were not in favor of the move, but many have changed their minds. "You can catch a team on transition and that's great," said Capitals coach Barry Trotz. "You see teams throw it into a space and the guy is just flying. The Rangers do that a lot." **GRADE: A**



REDUCTION OF GOALIE EQUIPMENT AND INTRODUCTION OF THE TRAPEZOID

If the NHL was declaring war on goaltenders by restricting the size of their equipment and their movement, then the fraternity has battled back valiantly. Despite the fact their equipment is now dictated by the size of their bodies and the equipment police keep a vigilant eye out for offenders, the position has never been better.

Perhaps it has nothing to do with equipment and everything to do with bigger goalies. In 2003-04, the 49 goalies who played at least 20 games averaged just a shade under 6-foot-1 and 194.8 pounds. This past season, the 50 goalies who played at least 20 games averaged 6-foot-2 and 201.7 pounds. In 2003-04, there wasn't a single goaltender taller than 6-foot-3. This past season, there were nine of them.

Some minds believe the league still has a ways to go when it comes to reducing equipment, and it continues to be a work in progress. But goalies are so well prepared now that they continue to keep ahead of even the best shooters. The head trajectory craze has hit, and goalies are tracking the puck better than ever. "I would say Alex Ovechkin probably hit about 35 posts last season," Trotz said. "But he has

to be so fine and so precise and so quick with it because the goalies are so good."

The trapezoid has limited goalies' ability to play the puck, which goes back to Nill's concern about the safety of D-men. And while many more goaltenders play the puck with aplomb, some of them make it such an adventure you wonder whether it wouldn't create more offense if they got more touches.

Boudreau has a unique idea. "Outside the trapezoid is the only place you should be able to play the puck," he said. "You'd see rims when you're rimming it in way more often than you see it now. The goalies just get out there and stop them all the time, but I think you'd see more offense if they couldn't go out there behind the net and stop the puck." **GRADE: C**

DIVING IN OPEN WATERS

Expanded end zones may have created more shot blocking from Barclay Goodrow & Co.

THE SHOOTOUT

The fact the league has done everything to marginalize it, from making regulation and overtime wins the primary tiebreaker and going to 3-on-3 next season, gives you an indication of how it is going. "I always thought that it was more exciting in the AHL with five guys rather than with three," Maurice said. "Because we got down 0-2 a couple times, but you still had a chance and you were still in it. So I like that one."

The fact it was designed as a skills competition and has evolved largely into a goaltending competition has taken the luster off it. **GRADE: C-**

REDUCTION OF NEUTRAL ZONE AND REMOVING THE GOAL LINES

It was seen as a minor change, but it's had a significant effect. Along with taking out the red lines, the league moved each blueline out two feet, reducing the neutral zone from 54 feet to 50, and the goal line was moved in two feet, to 11 feet from the boards. It made for bigger offensive/defensive zones, but it hasn't created more offense because players and coaches have adapted to it.

There's at least one GM who thinks it has contributed to the increase in shot blocking. "We thought moving the blueline out was going to create more

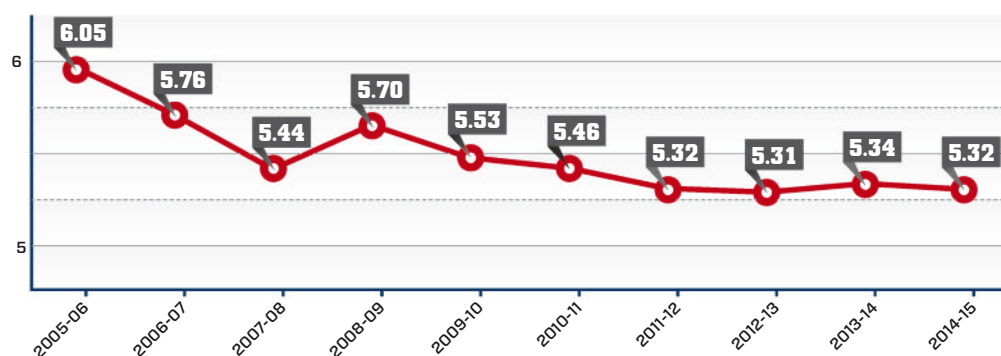
scoring chances, but it's probably created fewer," Nill said. "Instead of a winger standing next to a defenseman out at the blueline, now they stand in front of the net and collapse. It became more the European way. Coaches got smart and they collapsed." **GRADE: D**

NO LINE CHANGES ON ICING AND PUCK-OVER-THE-GLASS PENALTY

The two other major changes were to eliminate line changes for the team icing the puck and the controversial move to enforce the rule that penalizes players for two minutes when they put the puck over the glass. And it didn't take long for the rule to have a profound effect. In the third period of Game 7 in the 2006 Eastern final, Sabres defenseman Brian Campbell put the puck over the glass and the Hurricanes scored the game-winner on the power play. "I hate it when it's against me," Boudreau said. "But it forces that defenseman to make a play, and that's what we want." **GRADE: A**

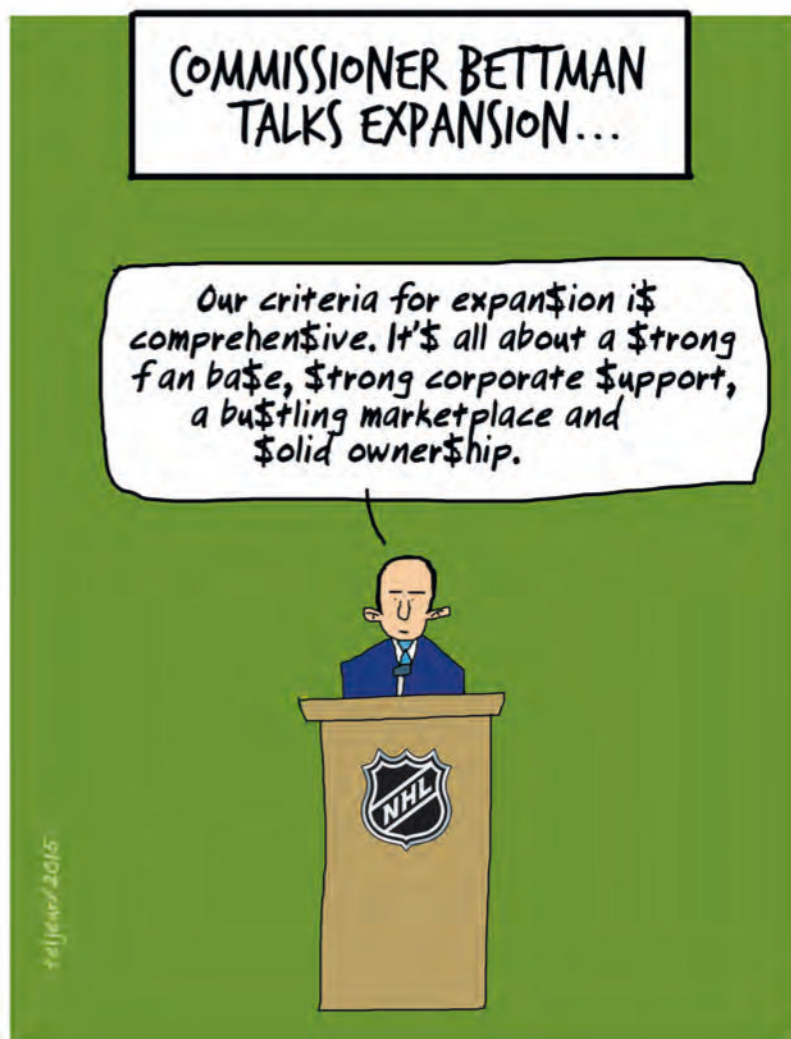
Ten years into the New NHL, it's not so new anymore. Meanwhile, players are more skilled than ever, and that isn't going to change. So perhaps when the Even Newer NHL comes along, it might have bigger ice, bigger nets and some of the rule changes we've proposed on page 36. Until then, we'll have to live with the fact that a better player doesn't always make for more goals. — **KEN CAMPBELL**

NHL GOALS PER GAME Since The Lockout



THE INSTIGATOR

By Charlie Teljeur



THN's COACH & GM OF THE YEAR

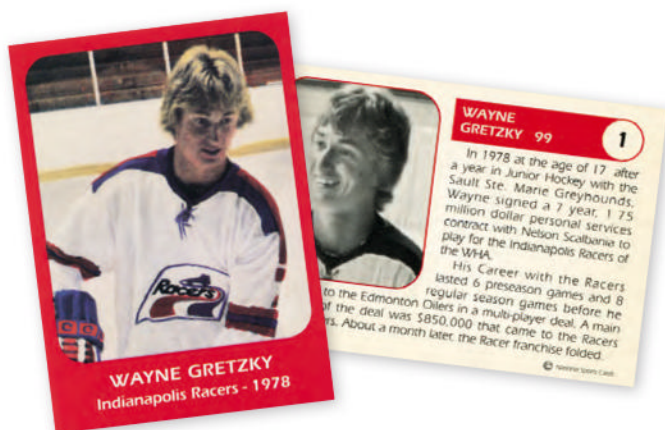
In a season of surprises, no team upset the picnic like the Calgary Flames, who over-achieved their way to a play-off spot and a first-round win over the Canucks. For that, THN has named Calgary's Bob Hartley as our coach of the year. Nashville's Peter Laviolette and Chicago's Joel Quenneville were runners-up.

In quickly building his squad into a Stanley Cup finalist, Tampa Bay's **Steve**



Yzerman is our GM of the year. Not only has his drafting been amazing, but the acquisitions of players such as An-

ton Stralman and Brian Boyle fit like a glove. Chicago's Stan Bowman came in second. Regular season and playoffs counted in both votes.



In The CARDS

WHEN HOCKEY CARDS EXPLODED in popularity in 1990, evolving from childhood collectible to adult investment commodity, many expensive cards – including Wayne Gretzky's rookie card from 1979-80 – were counterfeited. However, another fake Gretzky card of unknown origin also surfaced, showing him as a member of the Indianapolis Racers, Gretzky's first professional team in 1978. The card doesn't have a copyright date on the back, but it's similar in quality to cards from the early 1990s. Look closely, and you'll notice No. 7 on Gretzky's right sleeve, as a jersey with his usual No. 99 wasn't yet ready.

BY SAL BARRY OF PUCKJUNK.COM



STICKIN' IT WHERE THE SUN SHINES

Hockey has taken hold at the only ice rink in Central America thanks to the dedication of a transplanted Canadian

WHEN BRUCE CALLOW FOUND out that a local mall was being built in his adopted country of Costa Rica, he didn't think much of it. But when he discovered plans to build a synthetic skating surface in the center of the food court, it sparked dreams of introducing hockey into this tropical nation.

Callow had first travelled to Costa Rica in the summer of 1988 as a political science student and moved there full time in 1992 after working with NGO projects that supported development in Central America. In 1996, when he found out about the synthetic rink, he proposed a hockey program to the mall administration, and they hired him on the spot. Later that year, he started teaching hockey classes at the Castillo Country Club, which has a real ice rink, after pitching a similar

proposal. "It was a pleasure rink that didn't have hockey boards," Callow said. "But it was a place to ice skate, so we enjoyed it despite the limitations."

Callow had played hockey back home in Calgary since he was seven and missed it dearly. Roller hockey was already fairly popular in Costa Rica, but he felt he could get something going on the ice, and he wanted his sons to grow up playing the game.

The Castillo Country Club, built in 1974, was and still is the only actual ice rink in all of Central America. With basic facilities and a dream to expand, however, Callow hoped Costa Ricans would take an interest in hockey. Despite the program's humble beginnings and not having much equipment, Callow established a small but dedicated group of players in his first year. "Some had skated



HEADY COMPANY

Callow and Vargas flank Harper during the prime minister's visit to the Knights three years ago.

a bit on the rink and others were complete beginners," he said. "Costa Ricans are good at soccer, so switching to hockey isn't very hard for them."

With that, the El Castillo Knights were born. And 20 years later, they're still going strong.

With help from the NHL Players' Association's Goals and Dreams initiative, Callow has gotten gear for his players and even received a hockey net from Stephen Harper after Canada's prime minister paid a visit to Costa Rica in 2011. Support has come from lesser lights, too, including Chris Maltese, a hockey coach in California who found the program on the web and donated a batch of composite sticks to help out.

GROWING THE GAME

Whatever the El Castillo Knights may lack in talent they make up for in passion and ambition.

Thanks to the support, Knights players have taken part in hockey schools in Canada, played a tournament in Mexico and have had guest coaches come from as far away as Sweden.

David Vargas is one of those players. Five years ago, he saw the Knights playing at the rink and casually asked Callow if he could join. "Right away Bruce said, 'For sure you can, welcome to the group,'" Vargas said. "After a year and a half with the team, Bruce got me a scholarship to an ice hockey camp in Penticton, British Columbia."

He was only a beginner, but Vargas kept practising and has now been with the team as a player for four years and nearly two as a coach alongside Callow, now 50, and another Canadian, Serge Salvador. As a "veteran" with the team, Vargas enjoys teaching other Costa Ricans who are complete beginners like he was. He hopes that in the future, the Knights will have the opportunity to play in international tournaments and receive funding to create other teams in the country to have more competitors domestically.

And he just might get his wish, as the program continues to grow. Last year the rink at the country club was expanded (though it's still not quite regulation-sized), and there are plans in the works to grow an old-timers program. Maltese is bringing his men's league team down from California later this year for a game against the Knights, and Callow hopes to raise funds to play tournaments in Quebec and the Falkland Islands. Long-term, the program's biggest goals are to get affiliated with the Costa Rican Olympic Committee and the IIHF.

With thousands of Canadians living in this tropical paradise, taking advantage of the spectacular weather and hospitality, Callow is happy to have brought a little Canada for Costa Ricans to enjoy, too. — JONATHAN HILTZ



POKER STAR BETS ON NHL IN VEGAS

Canadian, world champion and hockey nut Daniel Negreanu talks up Sin City as the best place for NHL expansion

FOR MORE THAN A DECADE, Daniel Negreanu has been the face of poker. Nicknamed 'Kid Poker' after winning the World Series of Poker in 1998, he's first on the all-time money list with almost \$30 million in winnings.

Lately, Negreanu has moved beyond the felt and gotten involved in hockey. It remains one of Negreanu's biggest passions outside of poker, and he even chronicles his wagers on Twitter. He was an avid Maple Leafs fan growing up, crying after losses and playing street hockey until dark almost every day after school in front of his house.

Negreanu, still a Leafs fan, lives in Las Vegas, Nev., and has set his sights on bringing an NHL expansion franchise there. "I really like the prospective owner Bill Foley, and I'm confident hockey will work in Vegas," he said. "There are 2.2 million people in Las Vegas starving for a professional sports team.

The base is there. Sure, there is no hockey culture in Las Vegas at the moment, but wasn't that true of thriving franchises like the San Jose Sharks?"

Foley is head of Fidelity National Financial, a mortgage and title company based in Jacksonville, Fla., and is heading up the NHL pitch with the Maloof brothers, owners of the Palms Casino and former owners of the NBA's Sacramento Kings.

Negreanu has been part of a



founding group that helped sell more than 10,000 season ticket commitments to prove to the NHL there's a desire for a team in the city. So far, he has only been part of the ticket sales drive, but he might be interested in joining an ownership group. "That depends on what it looks like, but I am certainly interested in exploring it," he said. "Going forward, once the franchise is awarded, I may be involved as a minority owner."

Negreanu, 40, believes Vegas has some strengths over other expansion cities. As the face of poker, he would bring an infectious personality to the NHL and could help with marketing efforts should a franchise be awarded. "People here will learn to love hockey, and this city has the added bonus of tourism," he said. "People don't go to Columbus to watch the Blue Jackets and make a vacation out of it. That will happen with the Vegas team. If Calgary is playing in Vegas, you can bet people will use that as a great excuse to make a quick Vegas trip - good for the city, and good for filling the seats."

As the most successful tournament poker player in history, Negreanu sees parallels with the business world. "Bluffing, reading your opponent, value betting, etc., are all traits that are used regularly in business deals," he said. "Think about it. When you are negotiating a price to buy a company, you have to figure out what the best price you can push for is. If you push too hard, you may lose a customer."

"In a poker hand, if you want the guy to call your bet, you have to figure out what the maximum amount he will call is. If you bet \$5,000, will he fold? What if you bet \$2,700? Figuring out the right price to lure your opponent in is a skill that translates to all business deals."

With his efforts, Kid Poker hopes "checking" becomes more than just a poker term in Sin City. — **SEAN CHAFFIN**

GETTING INVOLVED

Daniel Negreanu is willing to use his fame on the poker tables to help bring the NHL to Vegas.



NAMING NEVADA

If Las Vegas is the frontrunner for an NHL franchise, the team will need a name. Here are some options, from the serious to the...in Vegas parlance...long shots

> BLACK KNIGHTS

Foley has said in the past that he likes this name, which references the West Point military academy, whose NCAA teams go by the moniker.

> WRANGLERS

Used by the ECHL team that formerly repped the city, it's a good fit and a little less on-the-nose than 'Gamblers.'

> VULTURES

This is just a cool name, and the carrion-fuelled birds are native to the area.

> SCORPIONS

Ditto for scorpions, but would the team feel obligated to play *Rock You Like a Hurricane* after every goal? On second thought, Carolina already uses that track to open each game.

> THUNDER

The name of the International League team that once prowled the city, the Thunder gave us Radek Bonk and even housed Alexei Yashin temporarily.

Other possibilities:

Rattlers, Aces, Wolves, Rough Riders, Outlaws

— **RYAN KENNEDY**

INSIDE YOUR GAME



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TOP DRAFT DUOS

McDavid and Eichel are one helluva 1-2 draft punch. The two phenoms have the talent, but time will tell if they can break into the ranks of the best duos ever

BY KEN CAMPBELL

As it turns out, we may have to alter the definition of the term “generational player.” It used to be that generational players came around only once in, well, a generation. But two in the same draft year? We’re getting a little spoiled here, aren’t we?

In the history of the NHL draft, which started modestly 52 years ago, only once have the No. 1 and No. 2 picks had careers that ended with induction into the Hall of Fame. That was in 1971 when Guy Lafleur and Marcel Dionne embarked on their NHL careers with the Montreal Canadiens and Detroit Red Wings. We’re not about to suggest the Hall of Fame start working on plaques for Connor McDavid and Jack Eichel just yet, but the possibilities are tempting.

McDavid has been carrying the burden of future NHL stardom since his early teenage years. Eichel closed the gap going into this season when it came to the race for No. 1 overall, but as the season went on, McDavid widened it. By the time the Edmonton Oilers picked first overall in the draft, it was a fait accompli.

This will be fun to watch. Adding to it all is the international flavor the rivalry brings, though the two phenoms will be teammates on the North American Young Stars team at the 2016

World Cup of Hockey. And even though McDavid has the early edge, and deserves so, it’s not a stretch to suggest Eichel might catch or even surpass him.

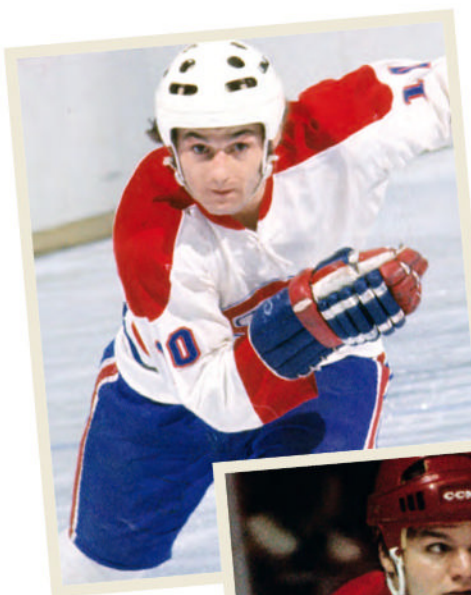
McDavid was the best player in junior hockey this past season, but Eichel was the best in college hockey at 18. McDavid, who was running on fumes in the OHL final, was shut down by two 21-year-old defensemen. Eichel, on the other hand, faced competition that mature in almost every game he played.

Where will McDavid and Eichel rank when all is said and done? Well, we’re expecting it will be high on our list of the best 1-2 draft duos in NHL history.

PRESSURE COOKER

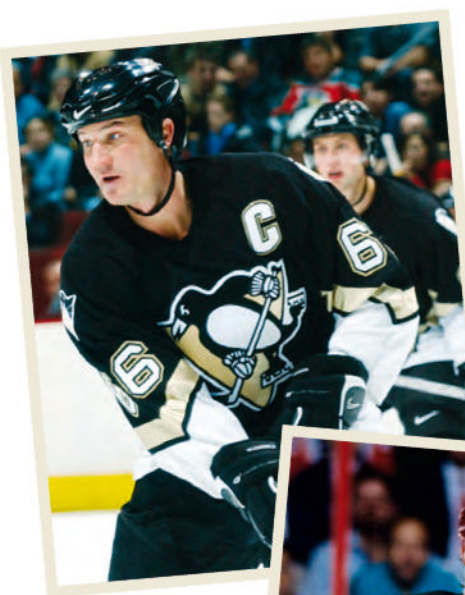
Eichel and McDavid are expected to step in and help their clubs immediately.





GUY LAFLEUR

Drafted No. 1 by Montreal from the Quebec Remparts (QMJHL)



MARIO LEMIEUX

Drafted No. 1 by Pittsburgh from the Laval Voisins (QMJHL)



MARCEL DIONNE

Drafted No. 2 by Detroit from the St. Catharines Black Hawks (OHA)



KIRK MULLER

Drafted No. 2 by New Jersey from the Guelph Platers (OHL)

1

GUY LAFLEUR AND MARCEL DIONNE (1971)

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The Canadiens no longer had exclusive domain over Quebec-based talent, so GM Sam Pollock wisely traded his first pick in 1970, along with Ernie Hicke, to the California Golden Seals for the No. 1 pick in 1971. It was worth the gamble, since Lafleur scored 130 goals and led the Quebec Remparts to the Memorial Cup. Dionne, meanwhile, had 62 goals and 143 points in the OHA, which was considered a more difficult junior league.

WHAT THEY WERE SAYING

"I hope those who doubted he was the best junior hockey player in Canada now are convinced that he is. He never lets his fans down, and that's the sign of a star." – Canadiens

chief scout Claude Ruel after Lafleur led the Remparts to the Memorial Cup.

"It's not exaggerating to say I'd have scored 1,000 (goals with the Canadiens) instead of 731." – Dionne.

DID THEY GET IT RIGHT?

Yes, but we'll never know how Dionne would have fared in Montreal. With his talent and scoring ability, he might have been just as successful as Lafleur was. He outscored Lafleur by 171 goals and adapted to the NHL far quicker. But Dionne left Drummondville to play junior in St. Catharines because he wanted to escape the Quebec fishbowl. He might have wilted under the pressure in Montreal.

2

MARIO LEMIEUX AND KIRK MULLER (1984)

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Like Lafleur, Lemieux was putting up ridiculous numbers in the QMJHL. His 282 points in 1983-84 stand as the record for Canadian junior hockey by more than 30 points. Lemieux was so coveted there was speculation the Pittsburgh Penguins and New Jersey Devils were tanking games in order to finish last. Muller was establishing himself as one of the most complete players in junior and had character oozing out of every pore.

WHAT THEY WERE SAYING

"There's a difference between being the most talented player and becoming the best player. Maybe one of those other kids – Muller or (Ed)

Olczyk or someone even lower in the draft – will turn out to be better than Lemieux. It's going to be boom or bust for Mario. He'll either be a superstar or do nothing in the NHL." – an NHL scout.

"To me, Muller is the best player in the draft. The Devils really did it right." – Detroit Red Wings scout Neil Smith.

DID THEY GET IT RIGHT?

Of course they did. Muller had a terrific career, producing as a first-liner in New Jersey and winning a Stanley Cup in 1992-93 with Montreal. Lemieux, however, was a generational player who saved the Penguins not once but twice. He's No. 4 in THN's Top 100 NHL Players Of All-Time.



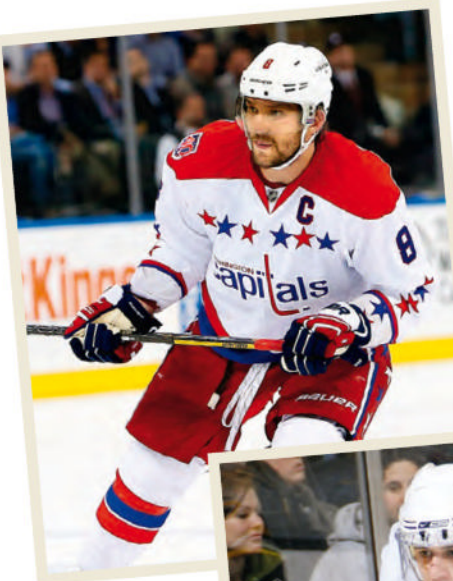
PIERRE TURGEON

Drafted No. 1 by Buffalo from the Granby Bisons (QMJHL)



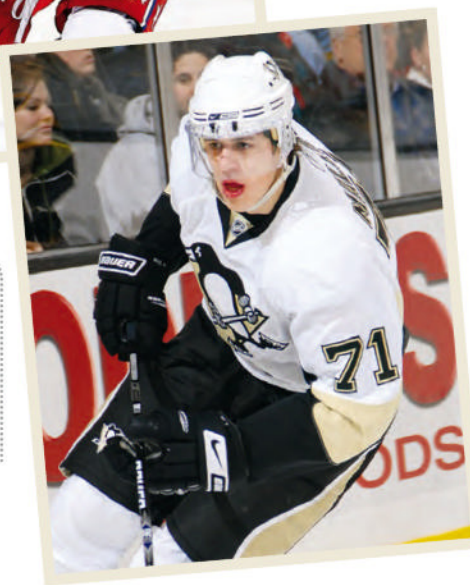
BRENDAN SHANAHAN

Drafted No. 2 by New Jersey from the London Knights (OHL)



ALEX OVECHKIN

Drafted No. 1 by Washington from Dynamo Moscow (Russia)



EVGENI MALKIN

Drafted No. 2 by Pittsburgh from Metallurg Magnitogorsk (Russia)

3

PIERRE TURGEON AND BRENDAN SHANAHAN (1987)

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Little-known fact: Turgeon and Shanahan combined for 2,681 points, just one fewer than Lemieux-Muller for second all-time among the top two picks.

Once again, the race to go first overall pitted a dynamic skill player from Quebec against a gritty Ontario player, and the team with the No. 1 selection went with the skill. Both played on the Canadian team involved in the 'Punch-up in Piastany,' a bench-clearing brawl with Soviets at the 1987 world juniors. Turgeon was the only player who stayed on Canada's bench, while Shanahan was in the middle of the chaos fighting Alex Galchenyuk's father.

WHAT THEY WERE SAYING

"A great French Canadian (Gilbert Perreault) led the rise of the Buffalo Sabres, and the Buffalo Sabres bottomed out with his retirement. I like to think another French Canadian will lead the Sabres back up again." – Former Sabres GM Gerry Meehan.

"It's almost as if Brendan Shanahan was tailor-made for our franchise." – Devils director of player personnel Marshall Johnston.

DID THEY GET IT RIGHT?

No. Though their career totals were 27 points apart, Shanahan's physical play and character made him a three-time Cup winner. Turgeon's teams reached the third round of the playoffs only twice.

4

ALEX OVECHKIN AND EVGENI MALKIN (2004)

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Ovechkin had been the No. 1 prospect for two years prior to his draft. In fact, the Florida Panthers tried to take him in the ninth round of the 2003 draft, claiming that with leap years taken into consideration, he was old enough to be drafted. The NHL, of course, quashed it quickly.

Malkin and Ovechkin were teammates on the Russian under-18 team at the 2003 under-18 World Championship, and each won a gold medal with the 2004 world junior team.

WHAT THEY WERE SAYING

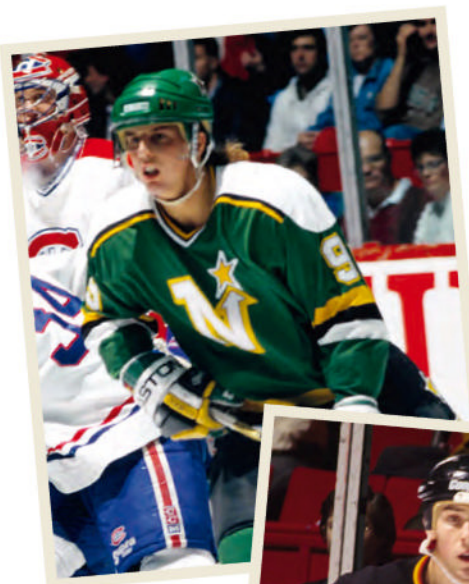
"He is big, strong and can take a hit. He has an excellent winning attitude, and

he's a nice person. Time will tell if he will become the best player ever from Russia." – European Central Scouting Bureau head Goran Stubb of Ovechkin.

"He's 1A and there's really no No. 2 in my book." – an NHL scout on Malkin.

DID THEY GET IT RIGHT?

Malkin has one more Stanley Cup than Ovechkin, who obviously has none, and both have enough hardware to open a store, but it's hard to argue Ovechkin wasn't the better choice. The deciding factor is Ovechkin has been far more durable than Malkin throughout his career. Ovie has missed just 2.6 games per season, whereas Malkin has missed 13 on average.



MIKE MODANO
Drafted No. 1
by Minnesota
from the Prince
Albert Raiders
(WHL)



TREVOR LINDEN
Drafted No. 2 by
Vancouver from
the Medicine
Hat Tigers
(WHL)



STEVEN STAMKOS
Drafted No. 1
by Tampa Bay
from the
Sarnia Sting
(OHL)



DREW DOUGHTY
Drafted No. 2
by Los Angeles
from the
Guelph Storm
(OHL)

5

MIKE MODANO AND TREVOR LINDEN (1988)

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Even though Modano was considered the superior offensive talent, he and Linden were separated by only one goal in the WHL in their draft year of 1988. Modano scored a hat trick in his first major junior game and was an offensive force for the Prince Albert Raiders, while Linden was establishing himself as a two-way player and tremendous leader in Medicine Hat. More importantly, he led the Tigers to their second consecutive Memorial Cup.

WHAT THEY WERE SAYING

"Missing training camp hurts the boy more than it hurts us. We don't expect Mike Modano to come in and take a job. It's a bonus for us if he

plays this year. For someone to start his career as a holdout isn't the most advantageous thing." – North Stars GM Jack Ferreira, after failing to come to terms with Modano.

"(Linden) may be the best impact player in the history of the franchise." – Canucks coach Bob McCammon.

DID THEY GET IT RIGHT?

Yes, even though Linden was a heart-and-soul player in Vancouver and goes down as one of the all-time great Canucks. Modano brought only one Cup to Dallas, and he needed a lot of help, but he was one of the most creative players of his era and made the Hall of Fame. He's also the highest-scoring American-born player ever.

6

STEVEN STAMKOS AND DREW DOUGHTY (2008)

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Stamkos was pegged as the No. 1 prospect from the start of the season and did nothing in his draft year to dissuade talent evaluators. Doughty was actually ranked No. 3 by the NHL's Central Scouting Bureau, behind Zach Bogosian. There were concerns about Doughty's weight but not his ability. Because of his late 1989 birthday, he was in his third OHL season, while Stamkos was finishing his second.

WHAT THEY WERE SAYING

"To me, he looks like Steve Yzerman." – an NHL scout on Stamkos.

"He can play it any way you want to play it. If you want to play a finesse game, he can

do that. If you want to play a physical game, he's fine with that, too. And when he hits guys, it hurts." – an NHL scout on Doughty.

DID THEY GET IT RIGHT?

Hate to dodge here, but the jury is still out. Doughty has the edge at this point by virtue of being the best player on two Cup-winning teams, the 2012 and 2014 L.A. Kings, while Stamkos failed to score a goal in his only Stanley Cup final with Tampa this past season. Doughty also has two Olympic gold medals, while Stamkos hasn't played at the Olympics yet.

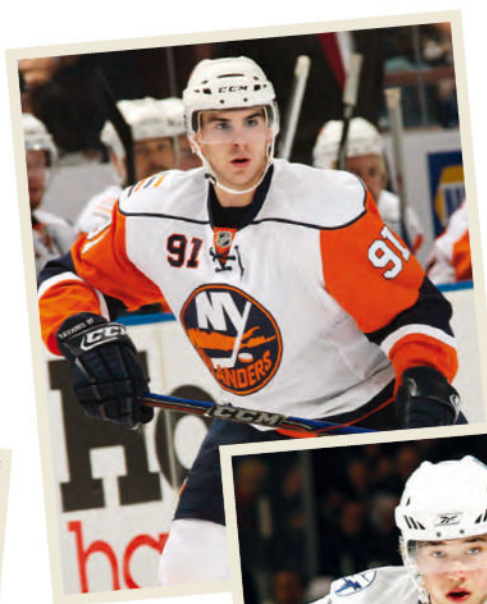
Stamkos is one of the most electrifying offensive players in the NHL, Doughty one of the best all-round D-men.



JOE THORNTON
Drafted No. 1 by Boston from the Sault Ste. Marie Greyhounds (OHL)



PATRICK MARLEAU
Drafted No. 2 by San Jose from the Seattle Thunderbirds (WHL)



JOHN TAVARES
Drafted No. 1 by the Islanders from the London Knights (OHL)



VICTOR HEDMAN
Drafted No. 2 by Tampa Bay from Modo (Sweden)

7

JOE THORNTON AND PATRICK MARLEAU (1997)

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Thornton had been pegged for NHL stardom since he scored eight points in six games in Jr. B at 14. Even though Marleau had more goals and points than Thornton did in their draft year and Marleau's team had more playoff success, there was no doubt who would go first overall. Regardless, over the course of their two-year junior careers, Marleau outscored Thornton 199-198.

WHAT THEY WERE SAYING

"Sometimes we pinch ourselves and say, 'My God, if he ever had the co-ordination he's going to have in four or five years'...Every day it's an adventure for him. If he ever gets used to his body, look

out." – Soo Greyhounds GM, Dave Mayville, on Thornton.
"A real talent, but he scares the heck out of me." – an NHL scout on Marleau.

DID THEY GET IT RIGHT?

Even though both players struggled during their rookie seasons under taskmaster coaches – Thornton mightily with Pat Burns in Boston, Marleau not as badly with Darryl Sutter in San Jose – Thornton has had the more distinguished career. Thornton has a scoring title and a Hart Trophy, and he and Marleau have won an Olympic gold medal, but neither has delivered his team to a Stanley Cup championship, separately or together. Advantage: Thornton.

8

JOHN TAVARES AND VICTOR HEDMAN (2009)

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

It's difficult to usurp the first guy to obtain exceptional status from Hockey Canada, and that's exactly what Hedman faced against Tavares in the 2009 draft. By the time Tavares was picked, he had established himself as an offensive stud, with three straight 100-point seasons. But he wasn't playing against men and living on his own in Sweden, the way Hedman had been doing since the age of 16 with Modo.

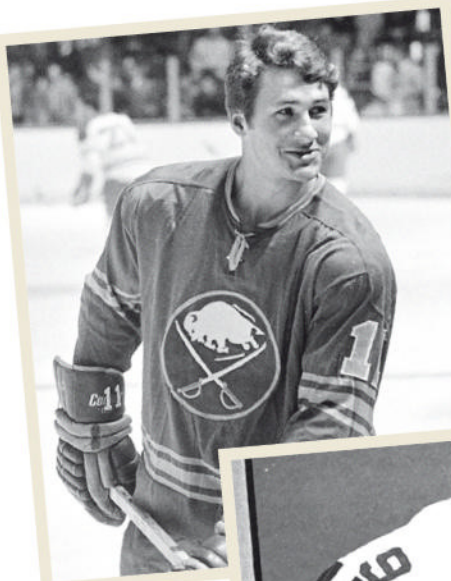
Tavares drew comparisons to Phil Esposito in terms of his ability around the net and his skating, which looked as though it needed work. No such concerns with Hedman, whose size and skating were seen as his major strengths.

WHAT THEY WERE SAYING

"John knows he's special, and there's nothing wrong with that. He doesn't hide from it. The great players, they know." – minor hockey teammate Sam Gagner.
"He will be a cornerstone on defense for a team for many years to come." – an NHL GM on Hedman.

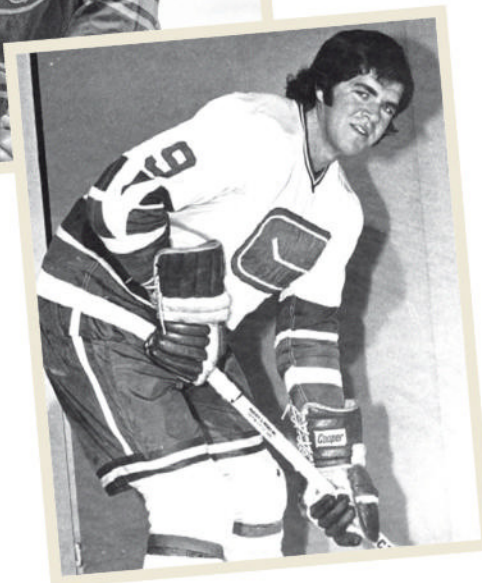
DID THEY GET IT RIGHT?

At this point, yes, but the gap is closing quickly. Anyone who watched Hedman dominate in the first half of the Stanley Cup final can see multiple Norris Trophies in his future and probably Stanley Cups. Tavares has worked hard to improve his skating and is one of the league's premier offensive players.



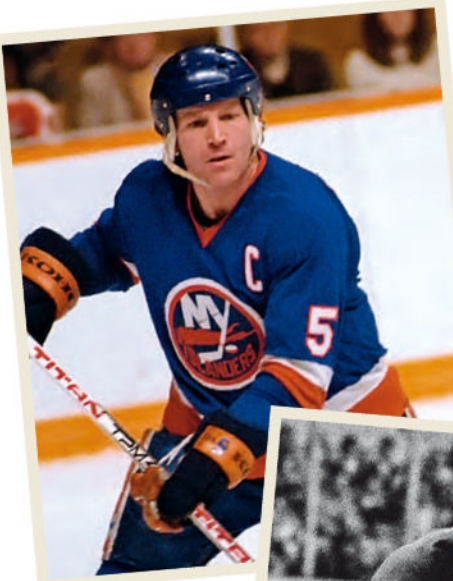
GILBERT PERREAULT

Drafted No. 1 by Buffalo from the Montreal Jr. Canadiens (OHA)



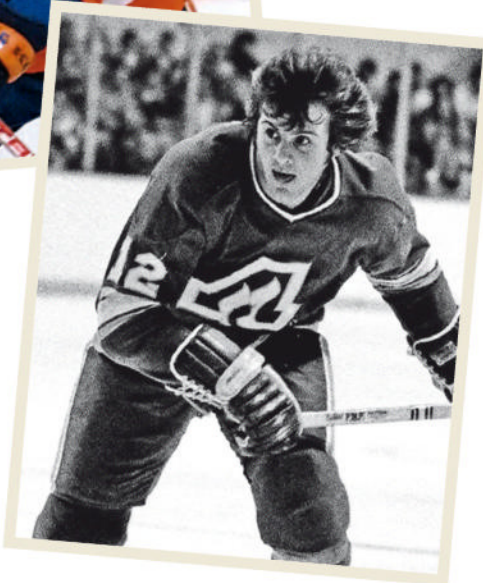
DALE TALLON

Drafted No. 2 by Vancouver from the Toronto Marlboros (OHA)



DENIS POTVIN

Drafted No. 1 by the Islanders from the Ottawa 67's (OHL)



TOM LYSIAK

Drafted No. 2 by Atlanta from the Medicine Hat Tigers (WCHL)

9

GILBERT PERREAULT AND DALE TALLON (1970)

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Perreault had established himself as the offensive star on a two-time Memorial Cup champion. The team Perreault's Montreal Jr. Canadiens defeated in the OHA final was the Toronto Marlboros, who featured a stud defenseman named Dale Tallon. After a year with the Oshawa Generals, Tallon was traded to the Marlboros for five players. With the Buffalo Sabres and Vancouver Canucks added as expansion teams, the first-overall choice was determined by the spin of a wheel, and the Sabres won.

WHAT THEY WERE SAYING

"We came out with the greatest hockey player in the world. Who can ask for anything

more? The Buffalo Sabres will be the first expansion team to win the Stanley Cup. You can be sure of that." – Sabres GM Punch Imlach on Perreault.

"To be honest, we would have grabbed Perreault, too, if we'd had the chance. But the scouts, and not just our own, claim Tallon could turn out to be the better player." – Canucks GM Bud Poile.

DID THEY GET IT RIGHT?

Absolutely. Tallon had a productive career with the Canucks, Hawks and Penguins, but Perreault forged a Hall-of-Fame career. He could not, however, make the Sabres the first expansion Cup champ because, despite an abundance of talent, the Sabres never won it.

10

DENIS POTVIN AND TOM LYSIAK (1973)

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

After getting Lafleur, Pollock tried the same trick two years, offering the Islanders a group of good NHL players in exchange for the first pick. But Isles GM Bill Torrey didn't take the bait because he thought so highly of Potvin. Lysiak, a big farm boy of Ukrainian descent from High Prairie, Alta., had won two straight scoring titles in the Western Canadian League.

WHAT THEY WERE SAYING

"He's the second coming of Bobby Orr." – Ottawa 67's president Howard Darwin of Potvin.

"When I look at the guys in the NHL, I just don't envision myself out there with them. I guess that is pretty strange,

but that's just the way it is. I really don't follow hockey as much as I should. But I imagine that will change now. I'll have to get pretty involved in the NHL, if I stay there." – Lysiak.

DID THEY GET IT RIGHT?

Four Cups, three Norris Trophies and a Hall induction for Potvin make the answer a resounding yes. Lysiak's career wasn't all that bad, as he had more than 800 points in 900-plus games and was close to being a point-per-game player in the playoffs. But this race isn't even close. The Atlanta Flames would have been better off taking Lysiak's Medicine Hat teammate Lanny McDonald, who went fourth to Toronto. **THE**



DIFFERENT PATHS
While Glen Metropolit was enjoying his time in the NHL, his half-brother, Troy, was serving time for kidnapping a lawyer and then killing an inmate.

FRANÇOIS LACASSE/NHLI VIA GETTY IMAGES



WORLDS APART

Raised as kids in the same crime-ridden cauldron, one Metropolit brother became a pro hockey player and the other a convicted felon. Now, after 16 years apart, they've found their way back to each other

BY KEN CAMPBELL

IT'S A SUNNY SUMMER MORNING IN TORONTO AND Glen Metropolit is back home. Well, not exactly. Home is actually a little west of the Starbucks where he's sitting. To be in an upscale coffee shop at all has to be considered a triumph for him. That's because Glen grew up in a neighborhood called Regent Park, which was one of the most notorious and densely populated projects in Canada. Constructed in the late 1940s, it was established to narrow the divide between the poor and the well off. The social experiment ended in disaster. Just a stone's throw from the financial district where billions of dollars flow every day, Regent Park was once described by a local newspaper this way: "Living here is like getting kicked in the teeth." The area has been gentrified in recent years and now includes mixed income housing, but back in the

day it epitomized the dead end street for the disenfranchised. Glen's 83-year-old grandmother still lives in Regent Park, but when he comes back to visit in the summer he couch surfs at the homes and apartments of his old friends in the area. He's used to that, since he moved about 50 times when he was a kid, by his estimation, including foster homes.

Glen's cellphone rings as he sips his coffee. It's his younger half-brother, Troy Metropolit. As the two make plans, Glen says his brother's name at the end of every sentence. "So, what time are you free, Troy?" "Should I pick you up at your girlfriend's place, Troy?" The name sounds foreign coming from his mouth, given Glen just saw his brother in June for the first time in 16 years, when he was 25 and Troy 22. "I can't believe I can just pick up the phone and talk to him whenever I want to," he says.



A couple days later, it's another bright morning in Toronto. Troy is in a small holding area at the halfway house in which he lives. He's required to check in twice a day and be back by 10 p.m. He must let his parole officer know where he is at all times, including calling in if he's changing locations. He's a free man, but his definition of free is relative. "Welcome to my castle," he says while sitting in a lounge during one of his daily mandatory check-ins. "I have a piano and a TV and everything."

Troy, 38, is talking about how he recently discovered a caterpillar on his pant leg while he was on the subway. He took it in his hand and held it for five stops before placing it on a leaf once he got off the train. "My girlfriend said, 'That's crazy. You killed a guy and you save a caterpillar?'" Troy says. "Why not? It didn't do nothing to me. And then it turns into this beautiful butterfly."

You're probably wondering what all of this has to do with hockey. Fair enough, but

if that's the case, you're not familiar with one of the most unlikely careers in NHL history. Glen played 407 games in the NHL with seven teams. In his last season, with Montreal in 2009-10, he had a respectable 29 points in 69 games and helped the Canadiens to the Eastern Conference final.

“ I ALWAYS WANTED TO GET OUT OF THAT ENVIRONMENT AND JUST GO PLAY HOCKEY ” – Glen Metropolit

Since then he's played in Switzerland and most recently Germany, where he helped the Mannheim Eagles to the German League championship. At 41, he just signed another one-year deal with Mannheim.

Glen should have been drafted in 1992, but since he was playing one of the lowest levels of high school hockey in Toronto, he was nowhere near the

radar of NHL scouts. But of the 264 players drafted that year, only 40 of them played more games in the NHL than Glen did. Only 29 scored more goals and just 34 had more assists and points. More remarkably, Sergei Gonchar was the only one from that draft still playing in the NHL. Most have been re-

tired for at least five years now.

All this happened despite the fact Glen had to overcome a host of obstacles just to make it to the NHL. While most other kids in his cohort were beginning the craze of 1-on-1 skills training, Glen was playing house league hockey, never working his way up to AAA. He wasn't drafted into the OHL or NHL, instead jumping to a Jr. B

FINDING A WAY OUT

Glen and Troy both tried to escape the projects of Regent Park in Toronto.

team out of high school hockey because his friend was already on the team. He had scholarship offers from Bowling Green and UMass-Lowell that were revoked by the NCAA clearing house, saying he'd have to red-shirt a year before being eligible. So Glen worked his way up from the lowest rung of the minors, taking summer jobs laying sod until something called the Long Island Jawz called him asking him to play pro roller hockey for \$400 a game.

Then there was his upbringing, which was surrounded by drugs, poverty and addiction. Glen has never met Marty McGee, an ex-Hell's Angels biker who's his biological father. Linda Hachey was just 17 when she became pregnant with Glen. Shortly after she and McGee broke up, Linda met Bruce Metropolit, Troy's biological father. The only time Glen saw Bruce

as a child was when he visited him in jail. With his stepfather in and out of the penal system, Glen would often watch hockey games on Saturday night while his uncles drank beer and smoked weed, and then he'd go play men's league hockey with them. He moved around incessantly, mostly because his mother couldn't afford to raise her two boys. "Bless my mom's heart, she did the best she could," Glen says. "I remember living with my aunt, my grandmother, in foster homes. It was crazy times for my mom. There was so much chaos – all the houses where we were, the drugs, the whole environment. I just remember I always wanted to get out of that environment and just go play hockey."

Glen recently had his mother and grandmother down to Florida for a visit. It was then that he was told one of his mother's brothers had committed suicide while in jail. His grandfather was so addicted to alcohol that his mother recalls going out to buy rubbing alcohol for him. Glen's grandmother watched her husband die of an overdose in front of her. It was in this crucible that his mother was born, and through Glen's and Troy's childhoods, she was never able to escape the cycle. Every time they would move out of Regent Park, circumstances would conspire to drag them back in.

Glen would go to church as a child to pray to God to become an NHL player. When he wasn't playing the lowest level of house league once a week, he'd find his salvation on one of the two outdoor rinks in Regent Park. And everywhere he went, he would stickhandle a tennis ball. In the fall, he'd stickhandle around the leaves on the ground. "It was like Wilson in Castaway," Glen recalls. "Just me and my ball."

You wonder how two brothers, coming from the same circumstances, facing the same obstacles, can embark on such divergent paths in life. Glen was in trouble only once when

he was kid, sent home from school for breaking a window. His ascension to the NHL is not unheard of – former NHLers John Madden, Tim Thomas and current NHLer Joel Ward have similar beginnings – but his ability to both overcome his situation and avoid the patterns of behavior he was exposed to are what make him unique. Troy, on the other hand, was always in trouble. His career as a criminal started early, after he stole a G.I. Joe from a department store

Smash a window in a clothing store or something, run in and grab, like, 15 leather jackets – quick easy couple grand in, like, a minute."

Eventually Troy landed in jail for two 18-month sentences, one for robbing a jewelry store and another for resisting arrest and assaulting a police officer. But then came the night of Jan. 6, 1999. While Glen was in the midst of an 80-point season in the IHL that would lead to his first NHL contract, Troy and



when he was eight. Linda tried to put Troy into hockey, but no coach could ever handle him. As Glen got more immersed in sports, Troy got more involved in petty crime.

About the time Glen was beginning to forge his NHL career in the late 1990s, his younger brother was well established as a career criminal. Stealing cars was his forte, but he'd happily take pretty much anything that didn't belong to him. "I'd break into stores, steal clothes and bikes and whatever," Troy says. "I liked it, it was quick, it was easy. I used to think, 'Oh, whatever, they've got insurance, no big deal. I ain't confronting nobody, I ain't hurting nobody.'"

OPPOSITE ENDS

For the past five years, Glen has been playing in Europe while his brother was in prison.

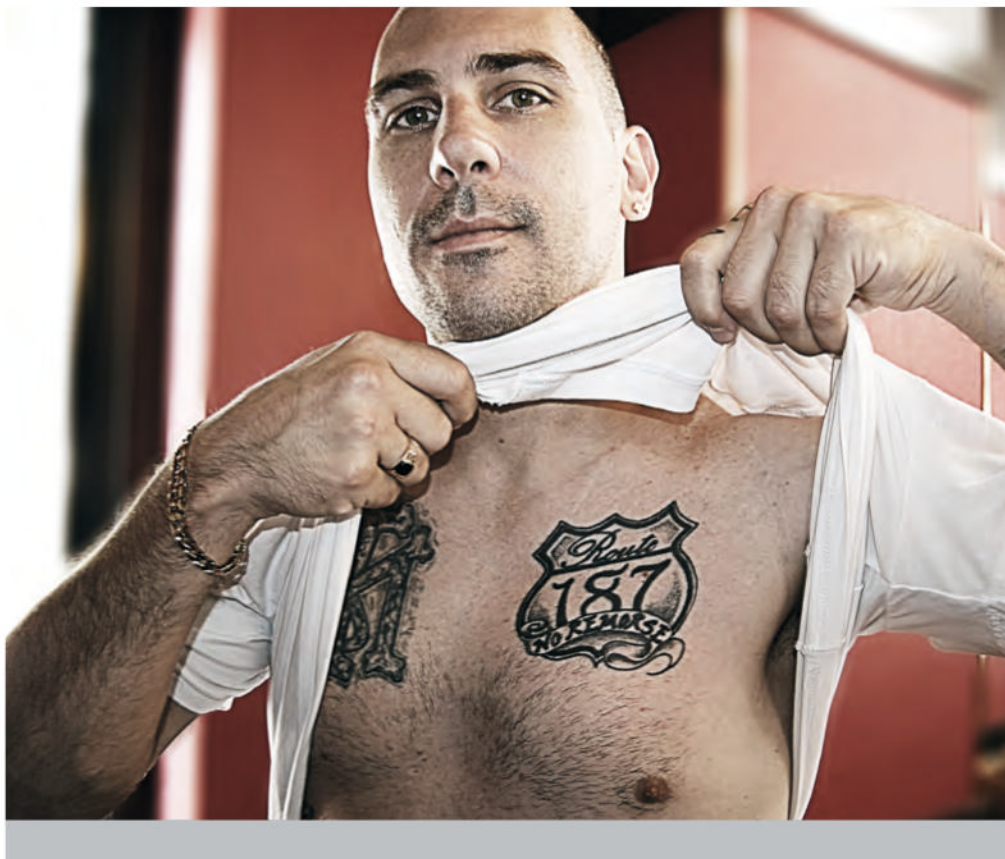
two accomplices were planning a "bump and rob," where you bump the car in front of you, and when the occupant gets out you shake him down and go on your way.

What was supposed to be a quick robbery turned into the kidnapping of a prominent Toronto lawyer named Schuyler 'Skipper' Sigel and his wife, Lynn. Troy was driving a stolen car when they saw their mark, a rich couple driving a Mercedes in an exclusive Toronto neighborhood. After Troy sprayed

mace in Sigel's face, one accomplice beat him and his wife and put them in the trunk of the car. From there, they were driven to an 19th floor apartment in Regent Park where they were pistol whipped and forced to give up the security code to their home and the PIN numbers for their bank accounts. "At one point in time we're thinking about just carjacking for the car to try to sell the car, and then it just kind of spiralled from there," Troy says. "We're like, 'Well, how much we going to get for a car?' And then you bump in and you're like 'Well, let's get their bank accounts,' and then it just seems to snowball sometimes. More and more. And then you've got them and you're like, 'Well, f---, let's ransom him now.' You know? You already have them. So, instead of taking their money from their credit card, you're, like, 'Well let's call their family and tell them we want 100 K.'"

The couple escaped when Troy and one of the accomplices left to get a bite to eat and the third accomplice, who was 17 at the time, fell asleep. Troy was sentenced to 16 years in prison (reduced to 14 years on appeal) for kidnapping, assault and forcible confinement. The trial judge called the crime, "gratuitous and subhuman violence, a crime that goes beyond pure horror," and said Troy and his accomplices were, "career criminals who had intentionally embarked upon a violent criminal path of life and had treated jail and the criminal system as mere occupational hazards." Troy's older accomplice also received 16 years. The sentences were, at the time, the longest ever in Canada for carjacking. "There's not a day that goes by that I don't relive the terror of that night," Lynn Sigel wrote in her victim impact statement prior to sentencing, "the deep fear, hearing the piercing voices of hatred screaming through my brain."

But it was three years into his sentence that Troy committed his most heinous crime.



Glen was in his fourth season with the Washington Capitals organization, bouncing to and from the minors but continuing to plug away. The night of April 15, 2003, Troy and another inmate at the Millhaven maximum security prison got into

fore, he'd been stabbed himself in the head and the back over an altercation about the queue to get into the shower. He said he was stabbed because he didn't take a threat seriously. After the incident, Troy went back to his cell and got his cell-

“ IT WAS EITHER HIM OR ME, AND HE WAS A VIOLENT DUDE. I KIND OF BLACKED OUT ” – Troy Metropolit

an altercation. It ended with Troy stabbing Marlan Assinewai 22 times in his neck, back, chest and abdomen. The inmates were watching a hockey game at the time, and the prison guards originally thought the yelling was from overzealous hockey fans.

Troy explains prison culture when he talks about what happened. Just a couple weeks be-

mate to give him homemade stitches, because going for medical attention would have labelled him as weak. Jail politics, he calls it. He says any sign of weakness is pounced on by other prisoners, and any sign of disrespect, either real or imagined, can't go unpunished. The wrong word can get you killed. If you're bullied into giving up your phone time, you'll be

BRANDED FOR LIFE

In prison, "187" is slang for murder. Troy killed an inmate in jail, stabbing him 22 times.

seen as a target. Even bragging about his brother being in the NHL would have caused trouble, so Troy never mentioned it and would only talk about it if someone asked him.

While Glen was riding buses in the minors and learning the pro hockey culture, Troy was quickly learning the prison life. While Glen was applying a blowtorch to curve his sticks, Troy was burning plastic dinner trays in his cell and rolling them under a book until they congealed to become as sharp as an ice pick. While Glen had to occasionally stand up for himself on the ice, Troy was forced to guard his life every day. "It's either you or him and he's a violent dude," Troy says of Assinewai. "I kind of blacked out. I went in there thinking I got him a few times, but I didn't

realize it was that many. You just go in and you're in a zone, you're focused kind of, but you're not. I was just thinking of going in and stabbing him a couple of times and hurt him so he goes to the hospital or leaves the jail, and then they won't let you back most times. So a lot of times, that's the way to get rid of the problem, because if you hurt him enough, they won't let him come back, because they'll say his life's in danger."

Originally charged with first-degree murder, Troy pled guilty to manslaughter and was sentenced to another eight years in prison. By the time Troy was sentenced, Glen was playing in Finland for Jokerit Helsinki, leading the team in scoring for two seasons. What was supposed to be a career in Europe turned out to be a three-year stint that ended when the Atlanta Thrashers signed him after he led the Swiss League in scoring in 2005-06. That was the beginning of a run of four straight seasons in the NHL during which Glen played for five teams. It was a glamorous life filled with riches, which was what his brother wanted but could only hope to attain by living a life of crime. Both Glen and Troy had escaped Regent Park, but they couldn't have taken more divergent paths out.

Sitting in a Coffee Time, Troy shows one of his many tattoos. On the left side of his chest is a tattoo that says "Route 187. No Remorse." The 187 signifies the section of the California Penal Code for murder, which is used by gangs as a synonym for murder. And the "No Remorse" rings as true for Troy as it did 12 years ago. He feels badly for Assinewai's family, but not for the man he killed. "I would rather take the life (sentence) than have some guy attack me and put me in a wheelchair, stab my eyes out or something," Troy says. "I didn't want to kill him, but at the same time I really don't have any remorse for killing him. Not really. Like, yeah, I feel a little bad. So I have some remorse, but not enough

to really lose sleep over it. Like, that might sound a little cruel or unhuman – I don't know – but when you live in it in there, that's the way it is."

Throughout their childhood, both Glen and Troy were surrounded by drugs and alcohol, but neither succumbed to them. Troy committed his crimes not to fund an addiction, but because it was an easy way to

son in Germany. He no longer scores goals the way he used to, but he's found a comfort zone playing the European game and has always thought the game at a high enough level that he can still compete. He has a one-year deal for next season, but he has no idea what the future holds for him in the game. He and his ex-wife, Michlyn, whom he met when he was playing

sacola suburb of Destin. The front of the store has a juice and salad bar and high-end apparel, and the back has hot yoga, TRX and Pilates studios. For a kid from the projects, it doesn't get much better.

Meanwhile, Troy has been living in a halfway house since his parole in November. He spends much of his time with his girlfriend, an old friend he

the two acknowledge they're just getting to know one another again. As kids, Glen was into sports and Troy was into petty crime. Glen had a hard time understanding what motivated his brother to do the things he did and an even more difficult time trying to convince him to stop. They grew up together, minus the times they were split up when they were in foster care, but Glen wasn't sure what to think when his brother first reached out to him after he was released. "I wasn't sure how I would feel because I didn't know him," he says. "But as soon as we talked the first time, I realized, 'Yeah, he's my brother and I do love him.' It was a weird feeling when it all starts to come back."

Glen and Troy have a sister, Nikki, who lives in a suburb of Toronto with her three children. Their mother married a third man, had a daughter with him and has since escaped Regent Park, earning employment as a bus driver for the Toronto Transit Commission, working as Linda Lafferty. When the brothers met this summer, the first thing Glen did was take Troy shopping for a new pair of shoes. After all this time, Glen hopes they can once again become a family. "I'm doing my thing, but I want to help him any way I can," he says. "He has a great support network here. I try to help him financially because I know it can be hard. Hopefully he can stay on the straight and narrow."

Troy is committed to staying out of the penal system once and for all. At 38, he's trying to find work, but the resume is a little sparse. His most recent job was working at a kitty litter factory. His time in prison coincided with Glen's NHL career, and he laments the fact he never got to watch his brother play live. And heading to Germany to visit him is out of the question, considering he's a convicted criminal with a violent past. "I missed his whole career," Troy says. "But I'm happy for him. He's done good for himself." **TNN**



make a living. He'd smoke weed and do ecstasy at raves, but it wasn't what drove him to commit crimes. "I just loved money," he says.

So did Glen. So much so that he was willing to sign with Yaroslavl in the KHL for the 2011-12 season, one year after leading his Swiss team in scoring. Yaroslavl was offering a one-year deal for \$1.2 million, more money than Glen had ever made. But his then-wife refused to go, so he re-signed with his Zug team for \$400,000. That September, the entire Yaroslavl team died in a plane crash that killed 44 people.

Glen has been playing in Europe for five seasons now, four in Switzerland and this past sea-

son in Germany. He no longer scores goals the way he used to, but he's found a comfort zone playing the European game and has always thought the game at a high enough level that he can still compete. He has a one-year deal for next season, but he has no idea what the future holds for him in the game. He and his ex-wife, Michlyn, whom he met when he was playing

in the ECHL with Pensacola, finalized their divorce last summer, though they are still close friends and have the bonds of their three children, 13-year-old Alivia, 10-year-old Max and eight-year-old Esther. "I'm older now, but I feel like I'm 25," Glen says. "I love working out and I feel strong. I don't know when it's going to end, but I'm going to just keep riding it out."

BROTHERS IN ARMS

In June, Glen and Troy saw each other for the first time after more than 16 years apart.

kept in touch with throughout his incarcerations. He's randomly tested for drugs and alcohol, and if he ever tests positive, he'll be sent back to prison. He tries to get by with temp work and receives \$85 a week for meals.

Despite having different fathers, Glen and Troy, who are separated by only three years, look almost like twins. They both have shaved heads, and they laugh and smile easily. Theirs is an uneasy brotherhood, though. Glen never visited his brother in prison, and

THE LISTS ISSUE

OUR RANKINGS IN 32 CATEGORIES





TEEMU SELANNE AWARD

BEST ROOKIE | AARON EKBLAD

EVEN AT 18, HE'S 'THE MAN'

Teenage defensemen aren't supposed to jump directly to the NHL and make a major impact. Nobody told that to Aaron Ekblad

BY MATT LARKIN

A VOTE IS, BY definition, "a formal expression of opinion or choice, positive or negative, made by an individual or body of individuals." Any vote is thus subjective, and that applies to award ballots in sports. No matter how strongly the numbers might point us to choose a particular candidate, some degree of gut feeling plays a role.

Looking at not only our vote for the top rookie of 2014-15 but also the official Calder Trophy vote for the same honor, did that gut feeling take over a little too much?

We voted Aaron Ekblad as our top rookie, with Mark

Stone finishing one point, or one third-place vote, behind him for second. The Professional Hockey Writers' Association's vote on the Calder went similarly, with Ekblad and Stone finishing a close 1-2.

Ekblad was a phenom in 2014-15. He began the season 18 years old and stepped right in as a top-pairing NHL blueliner, logging more than 21 minutes a game as Brian Campbell's partner in Florida. Ekblad had 12 goals, and his 39 points were the most by any defenseman who began a season 18 years old aside from Phil Housley and Bobby Orr.

Everything about Ekblad was so darned impressive. He

was shouldering unheard-of responsibility at a position rarely reserved for teenagers in the NHL. He carried himself like a seasoned veteran, and not just because he's 6-foot-4 and 216 pounds. He spoke with a real maturity. He told THN he got great advice about training his body to battle men, not boys, and that it helped him arrive for camp further along in his physical development than expected. Nothing about being a No. 1 overall pick seemed to scare him. "I didn't feel intimidated at all, actually," he said earlier this season. "I had guys like Willie Mitchell, and obviously this is a young team, so guys like (Aleksander) Barkov and (Nick) Bjugstad were able to welcome me with open arms. So that counts as fairly easy in my mind."

So it's easy to understand why Ekblad got our vote as the year's top rookie. But should he have? Was he the top freshman in 2014-15 or simply the most impressive?

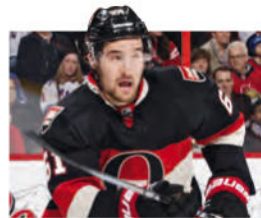
Stone finished with 47 points in 46 games after Jan. 1, ranking among the NHL's top five scorers in that stretch. He had six game-winning goals after the all-star break. He and Johnny Gaudreau tied for the league's rookie scoring lead, one point ahead of Filip Forsberg. Ekblad didn't lead rookie defensemen in points — John Klingberg did, and he did it in 16 fewer games than Ekblad.

If Ekblad was, say, 23 years old, would we still have voted for him? Was he the best rookie in the NHL or were voters biased toward him because he did so much so young?

Then again, maybe that's OK. There's no rule stating someone can't win for reasons other than the face value of his production. Ekblad was close enough to the rest of the field in his excellence to earn the status of "best" and, if his age blew us away that much more, so be it. **THN**

OH, SO CLOSE

These rookies impressed



MARK STONE

The former high-scoring junior worked on his skating and blossomed as a scorer in his first full season with Ottawa, tying for the NHL rookie lead with 64 points.



JOHNNY GAUDREAU

'Johnny Hockey' was a major reason for Calgary's return to the post-season. Equalled Stone's 64 points, clicking on a line with Sean Monahan and Jiri Hudler.



ANDREW HAMMOND

Our vote included any first-year NHLer. Hammond, 27, wasn't Calder-eligible. Too bad, as he posted one of hottest runs in recent NHL history (20-1-2, 1.79, .941).



FILIP FORSBERG

Only a slight second-half regression cost him the award. The victim of a great 2014-15 rookie class. Still had a fantastic season in Nashville with 63 points.



WAYNE GRETZKY AWARD

» MOST VALUABLE PLAYER | CAREY PRICE

IN OUR MINDS the MVP should inspire the question, "Where would _____ have been without this guy?" Hence the landslide victory for Price. He carried the offensively challenged Montreal Canadiens to an Atlantic Division title. The Islanders and Wild wouldn't have been nearly as dangerous without runners up Tavares and Dubnyk, respectively.

MARIO LEMIEUX AWARD

» BEST PLAYER | CAREY PRICE

BEST, MOST VALUABLE, it was Price any way you slice it. He paced the league in wins (44), goals-against average (1.96), and save percentage (.933). His home and road splits were very similar. He had a .920 SP or better in every month except for April, which had a tiny sample size. Price was the most dominant player over the past year.

PATRICK ROY AWARD

» BEST GOALIE | CAREY PRICE

YAWN, ANOTHER one for Price. The consistent Holtby, who appeared in a league-high 73 games, gets the love he didn't receive in the Vezina vote.

RUNNERS UP
2. Devan Dubnyk
3. Braden Holtby
4. Pekka Rinne
5. (no other votes)

RUNNERS UP

- 2.** John Tavares
- 3.** Devan Dubnyk
- 4.** Alex Ovechkin
- 5.** Ryan Getzlaf

RUNNERS UP

- 2.** Alex Ovechkin
- 3.** John Tavares
- 4.** Jamie Benn
- 5.** Vladimir Tarasenko



BOBBY ORR AWARD

» BEST DEFENSEMAN
ERIK KARLSSON

KARLSSON IS worlds above other blueliners in his ability to generate chances. His 292 shots were 28 more than the next D-man and fourth in the NHL.

RUNNERS UP

- 2.** Drew Doughty
- 3.** Duncan Keith
- 4.** Mark Giordano
- 5.** P.K. Subban



SAKU KOIVU AWARD

» COMEBACK PLAYER
DEVAN DUBNYK

IS IT MORE impressive to come back from poor play or from adversity? The former won out. Dubnyk went from AHL washout to elite NHLer in less than a year.

RUNNERS UP

- 2.** Pekka Rinne
- 3.** Kris Letang
- 4.** Tyler Myers
- 5.** Rick Nash



CAM NEELY AWARD

» BREAKOUT PLAYER | VLADIMIR TARASENKO

IT WAS ONLY a matter of time before Tarasenko's talent, health and coach Ken Hitchcock's trust converged in one year. Tarasenko sniped 37 goals in 77 games.

RUNNERS UP

2. Devan Dubnyk
3. Braden Holtby
4. Nick Foligno
5. Justin Faulk

GUY CARBONNEAU AWARD

» TOP PENALTY KILLER | KYLE BRODZIAK

TOFFOLI WAS A shorthanded scoring demon, but a close vote went to Brodziak, who was the centerpiece of the NHL's top-ranked penalty killing unit.

RUNNERS UP

2. Tyler Toffoli
3. Patrice Bergeron
4. Luke Glendening
5. Alex Pietrangelo



BOB PROBERT AWARD

» BEST FIGHTER
RYAN REAVES

REAVES, WHOSE fists are as fast and heavy as anyone's, threw down less this past season, but he just had trouble finding a willing opponent.

RUNNERS UP

2. Tom Wilson
3. Jared Boll
4. Derek Dorsett
5. Brandon Bollig



JOHN FERGUSON AWARD

» TOUGHEST PLAYER
DUSTIN BYFUGLIEN

'BIG BUFF,' THE NHL's heaviest player, has a blistering shot and thunderous hits. His lack of discipline constantly keeps him on the edge of a dirty play, too.

RUNNERS UP

2. Tom Wilson
3. Zdeno Chara
4. Shea Weber
5. Derek Dorsett

ROD LANGWAY AWARD

» BEST DEFENSIVE DEFENSEMAN | DUNCAN KEITH

TEAMS HAVE every opportunity to expose Keith. He plays so much of every game. Yet he continues to post exemplary puck-possession numbers.

RUNNERS UP

2. Ryan McDonagh
3. Shea Weber
4. Anton Stralman
5. Jonas Brodin

PAVEL BURE AWARD

» BEST SHOOTOUT SHOOTER | JAKOB SILVERBERG

WE SIMPLY chose the guy who scored the most. Silverberg did it on nine of 13 shots and had the best efficiency of any player with more than one attempt. Wow.

RUNNERS UP

2. Gustav Nyquist
3. Nathan MacKinnon
4. Patrick Kane
5. (no other votes)

GILLES VILLEMURE AWARD

» BEST SHOOTOUT GOALIE | SERGEI BOBROVSKY

ENROTH WAS near perfect, stopping 20 of 21 shots to go 5-0, but winner Bobrovsky had the bigger sample size, blocking 32 of 36 shots and going 7-1.

RUNNERS UP

2. Jhonas Enroth
3. Corey Crawford
4. Viktor Fasth
5. Carey Price

ALL HAIL THE 'HAMBURGLAR'

He had a coming out party for the ages. But now the heat is on Hammond to prove he's no flash in the pan. Cue the nerves

BY MIKE BROPHY

THINGS DIDN'T exactly go the way Andrew Hammond had it scripted in his mind.

The 27-year-old minor-leaguer was having a perfectly dreadful time tending goal in the AHL when Craig Anderson went down with a bum hand. So here Hammond was being called up to the big club and asked to, uh, not play.

Just sit. Practice, but don't play. Make NHL money while sacrificing your development. At least that's how it was playing out in his head as he watched from his seat at the end of the bench. "To be perfectly honest, I'm not stupid, and I understood this was a contract year for me and things had not been going well," Hammond said. "The longer I was up there the more frustrated I got because I knew I had to play, either in the NHL or AHL. I had to prove to the organization I was still a goaltender who would play at this level."

Hammond wished he could redeem himself from his 7-13-2 record, 3.51 goals-against average and .898 save percentage with Binghamton. And after serving as Robin Lehner's backup for eight games, he was pressed into duty against the Carolina Hurricanes Feb. 16 when Lehner suffered a concussion. Hammond allowed two goals in 20:46 of action in a 6-3 loss that was pinned on Lehner.

Not a great start to his NHL adventure, but, hey, the crease was now his. When you're No. 3 on an organization's depth chart of goaltenders, you'll take whatever comes your way.

Hammond won his first five games before the Senators dropped a shootout loss to the Minnesota Wild. So he was still

undefeated in regulation. Then he just kept winning and winning. And winning.

The Senators had all but given up on their season when they found themselves 14 points out of a playoff spot Feb. 10, but Hammond's heroics changed their attitude. He went 11-0-1 and was the second goalie in history to allow two or fewer goals in his first 12 starts. Frank Brimsek did it in 1938-39.

Following his run for the ages, Hammond finished 20-1-2 and got the Senators into the playoffs. Even though they lost in the opening round, and he eventually gave way to Anderson, it was a dream season.

Along the way, there were many highlights, but none brighter than recording back-to-back shutouts on consecutive days against the Ducks in Anaheim and the Kings in Los Angeles during a three-game

sweep through California. "People thought that I wasn't necessarily cognizant of what was going on around me, but I knew very well what was happening," Hammond said. "The biggest thing is I was a little older while this was happening and I had a better grasp of how to handle things. I understood what would happen with the added attention than if I had been a kid. At the end of the day, I was having just as much fun as the fans were having with it."

Hammond said the few weeks he spent as Lehner's backup provided him with valuable practice time with goalie coach Rick Wamsley. So even though he wasn't playing, he was still learning. By the time he took over as the starter he felt comfortable and acclimated to the NHL. "We spent that time just trying to settle his game down," Wamsley said.



RICHARD WOLOWICZ/GETTY IMAGES



ANDREW HAMMOND

"We worked on it and talked about how we could apply his skills. Once he started to get it, he became an NHL goalie."

Wamsley admitted he and the Senators coaching staff weren't exactly being geniuses. "I think it's fair to say if we knew he was going to win 20 in a row we would have played him earlier," Wamsley said

NERVOUS NELLY
Hammond likes getting nervous before games, because he plays better.



with a hearty laugh. "At the front end of his call up, we felt if he had to play we might be in trouble, but by time Robin got hurt, there were major signs of improvement, and we were comfortable with him playing."

Hammond's final numbers are impressive: 1.79 GAA and .941 SP. He parlayed that into a three-year, one-way contract worth \$4.05 million. Not bad for a guy who, in the first half of last season, was wondering if he'd be re-signed. Lehner, meanwhile, was traded to the Buffalo Sabres.

This summer, Hammond has been training harder than ever in preparation for his second act. "One of the big things they harp on in Ottawa is making sure that you are training to be athletic rather than just training to get stronger or faster," Hammond said. "A lot of that is doing more foot-related stuff."

While he's comfortable with his game, Hammond plays his best hockey when he's biting his fingernails. "This might seem a little weird, but I think I try to get myself nervous for games because I play a little better when I am nervous," he said. "Being nervous is not who I am naturally, but before games I do whatever I can to become nervous."

Hammond might be nervous while playing games, but his teammates and management aren't. They know a good goalie when they see one. **THE**

TOP 5

FEEL GOOD STORIES



Youngsters make up the other four heartwarmers

2. PLEASE TRADE FOR MY DADDY

Jordan Leopold's 11-year-old daughter, Jordyn, was missing her father, so she wrote a letter to the Minnesota Wild coaching staff asking if they could arrange a trade.

Lo and behold, the Wild acquired Leopold for Justin Falk and a fifth-round pick. Leopold had been living away from his family during the season. "My dad is very (lonely) without his family," Jordyn wrote. "We are living in Minnesota right now, and I am lost without my dad and so is my mom, my two sisters and my brother."

Leopold's wife, Jamie, said she didn't know her daughter had written the letter and when she found it, "I read it and I just started bawling."

3. THE BUTTERFLY CHILD

Fourteen-year-old Jonathan Pitre loves sports, especially hockey. But because of a rare skin condition, epidermolysis bullosa (EB), he can't play the game. There is no cure for the disease, and those who have it live with constant, excruciating pain. In an emotional documentary on TSN, Pitre explained that people with EB are called Butterfly Children, "because our skin is as fragile as a butterfly's wings."

On Nov. 20, 2014, the Ottawa Senators signed the youngster to a one-day pro scouting contract, and he spent the entire day with the team. He watched the Senators game with assistant GM Pierre Dorion and interacted with the players. "I'd like to play sports all day," Pitre said. "And I wouldn't suck."

4. METHOD TO HIS MADNESS

Alex Ovechkin desperately pleaded to be the final player chosen in the annual NHL All-Star Game draft so he'd get the car that goes to the last pick. But it didn't work.

However, even though Ovechkin wasn't the MVP of the game, Honda did donate a car to 'The Great 8,' who turned around and donated it to the Washington Ice Dogs hockey program. 'Ovie' was introduced to it through his friend, Ann Schaab, a 10-year-old girl with Down syndrome who he took on a sushi date last September. "It means a lot," Ovechkin told NHL.com. "Honda connected with my agent, and they just gave me a car so I'm going to donate it to the Ice Dogs and that sweet little girl."

5. OH, HOW THEY DANCED

Former NHLer Mathias Tjärnqvist made Sofie Ruther's day when he took the girl, who has Down syndrome, to her prom in May.

Tjärnqvist, who played 173 NHL games with the Dallas Stars and Phoenix Coyotes before returning home to Sweden to play, said the date was arranged by the girl's father, Joakim, who knew Tjärnqvist when his daughter was just five years old.

"It is always special going to the prom," Joakim told the local media in Helsingborg, Sweden. "But to be escorted by a star makes it even more special."

Added Tjärnqvist: "To experience the prom again is fantastic fun. There was no doubt in my mind when I was asked."

TOP
5

CONTROVERSIES

Not every notorious story is a controversy. The KHL struggled financially, and mumps afflicted the NHL this season, but the news didn't spark debate the way these five incidents did

BY **MATT LARKIN**

1. TANKING FOR CONNOR MCDAVID AND JACK EICHEL

Any time a team endured a prolonged skid down the NHL standings, whispers emerged of teams maneuvering in hopes of earning more Ping-Pong balls in the draft lottery and thus a better chance at Connor McDavid. Even landing the No. 2 overall pick guaranteed a franchise player in Jack Eichel. The Sabres, who traded their No. 1 and No. 2 goaltenders during the season, were perceived as the worst offenders, though Edmonton won the McDavid sweepstakes.

2. SLAVA VOYNOV'S ASSAULT CHARGES

The euphoria of a 2014 Stanley Cup victory wore off quickly when Voynov, one of L.A.'s top D-men, was arrested in October. He was charged with felony domestic violence against his wife. The police report of the alleged attack was grisly. The NHL suspended Voynov for what turned out to be the entire season and, eventually, made the controversial ruling to give the Kings salary cap relief. Voynov was scheduled to stand trial in July.

3. CITY OF GLENDALE ABANDONS THE COYOTES

The city council of Glendale, Ariz., stung the Coyotes with a 5-2 vote to void the 15-year, \$225-million Gila River Arena agreement just two years in. The council members believed a technicality could free them from the deal, as an employee of theirs connected to the original agreement changed sides to work as the Coyotes' general counsel. The Coyotes were outraged, their future thrust into limbo, and no one was angrier with the Glendale government than NHL commissioner Gary Bettman.

4. RUSSIANS WALK OFF THE ICE AFTER LOSING AT WORLDS

Russia couldn't cope after a shellacking from Canada in May's World Championship final. The Russians broke etiquette by leaving the ice before Canada's anthem. Only a handful of players, including Alex Ovechkin and Evgeni Malkin, remained on the ice.

5. P.K. SUBBAN SLASHES MARK STONE

The Canadiens and Senators were somehow equally outraged when Subban slashed Stone on the wrist in Game 1 of the first round. Subban couldn't believe the refs ejected him, considering Stone finished the game. Afterward, Ottawa coach Dave Cameron demanded the NHL suspend Subban "or one of their best players gets slashed and just give us five (minutes)." Stone was revealed to have fractured his wrist on the play, but Subban wasn't suspended.



PK
SUBBAN

TOP
5

NON

NHLERS

Which players stood out in Europe in 2014-15? Here's a round-up of the best

BY **RYAN KENNEDY**



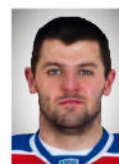
STEVE MOSES
RW, JOKERIT (KHL)

Leading Jokerit in scoring, the diminutive Moses broke the KHL record with 36 goals and got a one-year, \$1-million contract from Nashville for his efforts.



DEREK RYAN
C, OREBRO (SHL)

The former Spokane Chief and Alberta Golden Bear led the SHL in scoring and took home Guldhjälmen MVP honors in the process. Just signed with Carolina.



ALEXANDER RADULOV
RW, CSKA (KHL)

The prodigal son took home the KHL scoring title with CSKA Moscow and led the playoffs in offense, too, despite his squad falling in the semifinal.



ARTEMI PANARIN
LW, SKA (KHL)

Recently inked by the Blackhawks, Panarin helped SKA St. Petersburg win the Gagarin Cup thanks to his excellent scoring prowess.



JOONAS DONSKOI
RW, KARPAT (FIN.)

Originally drafted by Florida, Donskoi signed with San Jose after killing it in the Liiga playoffs, winning the Jari Kurri award. He's a demon in the shootout, too.

TOP
5

MASKS



1. ANDREW HAMMOND

No mask played a bigger role in NHL folklore this season. Hammond's unbelievable play earned him fame, but his nickname – represented by the 'Hamburglar' design on his helmet – added significantly to his mystique in Ottawa.

2. JOHN GIBSON

The Anaheim prospect was ahead of his time, busting out a retro video game motif a year before the release of the movie Pixels. The Duck mask logo stands in for Pac-Man, chowing down on dots while doing its best to avoid ghosts in a maze.



4. CAM TALBOT

Ex-Ranger Talbot, now an Oiler, has consistently used the New York-based Ghostbusters on his mask. This one was the best, featuring staples from the first film like Zuul, the converted hearse car and, of course, the Stay Puft Marshmallow Man.



5. ROBERTO LUONGO

Simple isn't always boring. Luongo plasters a big, honkin' Panthers logo on his lid, and it just works. The cat looks nice and bright, and it epitomizes team spirit. The sunny, palm-tree shoulder patch logo appears on the other side of the mask.

TOP
5

JERSEYS



1. PITTSBURGH THROWBACK

The 1980s did a lot of things right when it came to jerseys, and this Penguins tribute shows why. Big logo, simple striping and a nice bold color scheme that works perfectly with the city's black and gold theme.

2. ST. LOUIS BLUES AWAY

The Blues have always had some version of the 'Bluenote' on their sweater, so changes are incremental. The 2014-15 version basically cleaned up what St. Louis had been wearing since 2007.



3. WASHINGTON WINTER CLASSIC

This wasn't the Caps' first Winter Classic, so they had to get creative with their duds. For the latest outing, Washington took inspiration from the city's old Eastern League teams for a unique throwback feel.

4. SAN JOSE STADIUM SERIES

The Stadium Series is all about the future, so there's a bit more risk-taking. The Sharks and Kings both went with bold two-tone iterations, but the Sharks win thanks to the bold teal advantage.



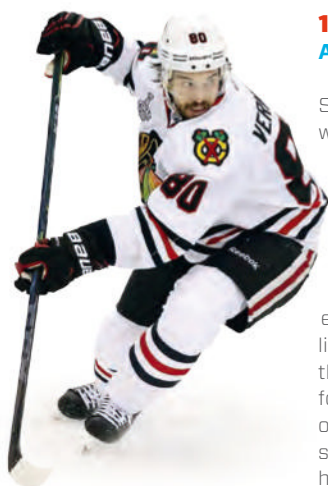
5. ARIZONA COYOTES THROWBACK

One of the most divisive sweaters ever, the old Coyotes 'Picasso' jersey – officially known as 'Kachina' – was brought back this season by Arizona as a nod to the franchise's roots. All hail Jeremy Roenick!

TOP
5

OVERRATED

BY JARED CLINTON



1. ANTOINE VERMETTE, C, ARIZONA/CHICAGO

Yes, the Blackhawks won the Stanley Cup, and, yes, Vermette was key to their series win over the Tampa Bay Lightning in the final. But remember what the Blackhawks gave up to get Vermette: a first-round draft pick and a solid prospect in Klas Dahlbeck. Vermette was very effective in a second-line role earlier in his career and many believe the 33-year-old can play like his former self. But the perception of Vermette as a game-changing second-line center simply doesn't hold up any longer.

2. MATT BELESKEY, LW, ANAHEIM DUCKS

The Bruins' newest sniper scored 22 goals on 145 shots while playing alongside Ryan Getzlaf, Corey Perry or Ryan Kesler. But history suggests he won't do that again. Beleskey is a good third- or fourth-line player, but his shooting percentage nearly doubled this past season, and those 22 goals are more than double his career high. One good year hasn't made Beleskey a star.

3. JONATHAN QUICK, G, LOS ANGELES KINGS

He's got two Stanley Cup rings and could easily bounce back into the league's elite, but this past season he was the 14th best starting goalie in 5-on-5 play and his 5-on-5 save percentage was lower than that of Ondrej Pavelec, Craig Anderson and Corey Crawford, to name a few. Quick was just an OK goaltender in 2014-15, not the great one he was believed to be.

4. DAN GIRARDI, D, NEW YORK RANGERS

If blocking shots were enough for a player to be considered a star, Girardi would qualify. That's not the case, yet you'll still see Rangers fans going to bat for the 31-year-old. One problem is he's the victim of a contract that misrepresents his value: he's making the money of a star blueliner when he's just a good workhorse defenseman and not much else.

5. RYAN MILLER, G, VANCOUVER CANUCKS

Miller's game has slipped significantly, and that was evident this past season. Even before an injury took him out of the Canucks lineup, Miller nearly lost his starting role to Eddie Lack. In the post-season, Vancouver coach Willie Desjardins went with Lack over Miller for the first three games against Calgary. Miller isn't the Olympic-caliber goaltender he once was.

TOP
5

UNDERRATED

BY JARED CLINTON

1. JORI LEHTERA, C, ST. LOUIS BLUES

Because of his age, he didn't qualify for the Calder Trophy, but Lehtera was indeed a first-year NHLer in 2014-15. He wowed for St. Louis, but not much was made of his production because his great year was overshadowed by the play of Vladimir Tarasenko. But the Blues know his value. That's why they signed the 27-year-old Finn to a three-year contract extension.

2. DANNY DEKEYSER, D, DETROIT RED WINGS

There aren't many college free agents that pan out as quickly as DeKeyser has (ask Edmonton's Justin Schultz). The smooth-skating defender is going to be the future of the Wings blueline and the heir apparent to Niklas Kronwall as Detroit's next star defenseman. In 2014-15, DeKeyser posted two goals and 31 points, but he's rarely talked about as a premier young defenseman.

3. DERICK BRASSARD, C, NEW YORK RANGERS

On a team that boasted Rick Nash, Mats Zuccarello, Chris Kreider and Martin St-Louis this past season, Brassard sometimes flew under the radar. It won't be that way much longer, however. Brassard set career-highs with 19 goals and 60 points, 39 of which came at 5-on-5. He has become a good distributor and a solid second-line center. The Rangers' decision to buyout Brad Richards last off-season looks all the more genius now considering how well Brassard has continued to develop.



4. DAVID PERRON, LW, PITTSBURGH PENGUINS

Perron gets labelled as an under-producer from time to time, but it's hard to think of a single player whose production goes more unnoticed. At 5-on-5, Perron scored 14 goals and 31 points while posting a shot-attempts-for percentage of 55. He also had brutal puck luck: 2014-15 was the first time since his sophomore season that his shooting percentage was below 10 percent.

5. COREY CRAWFORD, G, CHICAGO BLACKHAWKS

There's a perception of Crawford as the perfect system goaltender - he wins because of the team in front of him. This past season, that couldn't have been further from the truth. Of the 35 goaltenders who played at least 1,500 minutes, Crawford had the eighth best 5-on-5 save percentage, ahead of goaltenders such as Tuukka Rask, Henrik Lundqvist, Jonathan Quick and Sergei Bobrovsky.

BRIANNA
DECKER**4. NOORA RATY, G**

Like Shannon Szabados, Raty made waves as a goaltender in men's minor pro hockey. One of the greatest women's goalies ever, Raty suited up for 14 games in the Finnish second and third divisions. When she's on her game, there's no better women's netminder.

5. CAROLINE OUELLETTE, LW

Ouellette says she's calling it quits after an illustrious international and professional career, but after the season she had, it's hard to put her too far down this list. In 22 games with the CWHL's Montreal Stars, Ouellette had eight goals and 26 points.

scoring by D-men in the regular season, she added five assists en route to the CWHL title.

8. MARIE-PHILIP POULIN, LW

Poulin is the first entry from the NCAA on the list, but she's quickly becoming one of Canada's elite forwards. After scoring 27 goals and 54 points in 32 games with Boston U., Poulin notched another three goals and six points at the World Championship.

9. KENDALL COYNE, LW

Coyne is the youngster on this list at 23, but she's already looking like she'll be part of the next generation of standout American women's players.

TOP
10

WOMEN'S PLAYERS

BY JARED CLINTON

1. BRIANNA DECKER, C

What Decker accomplished this past season would be like Connor McDavid breaking into the NHL next season and eclipsing the 150-point plateau. That's how great Decker was in 2014-15, and that's why she's the best women's player in the world right now.

In her rookie campaign in the CWHL, Decker, a center for the Boston Blades, had 16 goals and 32 points in 12 games. She finished second in scoring, behind Rebecca Johnston, who notched 17 goals and 37 points in 24 games. Had Decker continued her tear through the CWHL and played as many games as Johnston, she could have reached 60 points.

Not only was Decker's first season successful, she lit it up in the playoffs, adding another five goals and eight points in three games. In the Clarkson Cup final, she managed two points to help lead her Blades

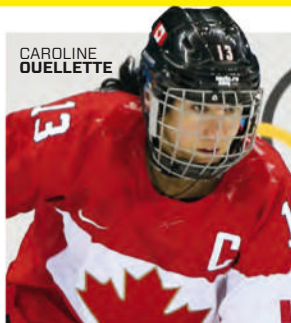
to the CWHL championship. She wasn't done there, though. At the World Championship in Malmo, Sweden, Decker finished with five goals and 11 points, good for second in scoring behind Team USA teammate Hilary Knight. When it mattered most, she came up with the winning goal in a thrilling 7-5 defeat of Team Canada in the gold medal game.

2. HILARY KNIGHT, LW

Were it not for Decker's performance in the CWHL, it would be hard to beat Knight. Her seven goals and 12 points were the best total at the World Championship, and there are few women more talented.

3. REBECCA JOHNSTON, RW

Johnston's season was tremendous and her two goals and five points helped Canada make it back to the gold medal game at the worlds. At 25, her future is bright with the Canadian national team.

**6. SHANNON SZABADOS, G**

Everyone's favorite SPHL goaltender, Szabados got better with each passing game in the men's minor pro league. By season's end, she was splitting time in goal and finished with a 3.12 goals-against average and .907 save percentage.

7. MONIQUE LAMOUREUX, D

It's not hard to understand why the Boston Blades won the Clarkson Cup with a roster that boasts Decker, Knight and Lamoureux. Not only did Lamoureux finish second in

At NCAA Northeastern, Coyne had 28 goals and 52 points in 31 games and wowed at the worlds with three goals and seven points.

10. FLORENCE SCHELLING, G

Schelling opened everyone's eyes in the Swiss net during the 2014 Olympics, where she was named the tournament MVP. She followed that up with another star-making performance, posting a .941 SP and 1.78 GAA at the World Championship.

FLORENCE
SCHELLING

TOP
5

ARENAS

The Colisee headlines this quintet of old barns any hardcore hockey fan has to see before they're brought down to the ground

BY MIKE BROPHY

I F YOU TEAR IT DOWN, they won't come. That's the sad truth about one of the grandest arenas in all of sports – the Colisee in Quebec City, now called Colisee Pepsi. If you have never had the pleasure of visiting it, you lose.

Built in 1949 with an original seating capacity of 10,034, the Colisee is slated for demolition this fall. Following a concert by Metallica in September, it'll be torn down. A new arena, the \$400 million Videotron Centre, has been constructed across the parking lot from the Colisee in hopes the NHL will one day return to Quebec City.

For those who played at the Colisee, it will be a sad day indeed, even if their memories of the old rink will live on. "You think about the amazing legends who played there before you," said Dale Hunter, who played seven seasons with the Quebec Nordiques. "I think about Jean Beliveau playing there (for the Quebec Aces) and for the Montreal Canadiens to get him, they had to buy the franchise. I think about a great defenseman like J.C. Tremblay playing there. I think about Guy Lafleur playing there. And then you think about the little guys – the kids who played in the Quebec pee-wee tournament."

In fact, thousands of young players who never made it to

the pros probably look back at playing before 10,000 screaming fans at the Colisee in Quebec City as the highlight of their hockey careers.

Often referred to as 'The House that Beliveau Built,' because of Le Gros Bill's immense popularity in the early 1950s with the Aces of the Quebec Senior League, the Colisee hosted some memorable hockey events, including four Memorial Cups (1971, 1991, 2003 and 2015), the 1974 Summit Series between Canadian-born players from the WHA and players from the Soviet Union, the 1975 Avco Cup (WHA championship series), 1976 and 1991 Canada Cup games and the 2008 IIHF World Championship.

Lafleur first rose to prominence as a member of the junior Quebec Remparts from 1969 to 1971, a franchise that was steered to a Memorial Cup championship in 2006 with Patrick Roy at the helm.

Hunter, for one, is sad to know his old home away from home is to be blown to bits. "I really loved that arena," he said. "You know it's old, but it's clean and really nice. And the hotdogs are pretty damn good, too. They toast the buns so their hotdog is unique."

Here are four more classic arenas fans should see in their lifetime:



2. HOBEY BAKER MEMORIAL RINK

Named in honor of Princeton hockey and football star Hobart 'Hobey' Baker, the rink is the second oldest arena still being used in NCAA Div. I hockey behind only Matthews Arena in Boston. Opened in 1923, the Princeton, New Jersey-based arena seats 2,092 and is home to the Tigers' men's and women's hockey teams.

3. MATTHEWS ARENA

Opened in 1910, Matthews Arena is home to Northeastern Huskies men's and women's hockey teams. It was the original home for the Boston Bruins as well as the New England Whalers. The first professional game played there was in March 1911 between the Montreal Wanderers and Ottawa Senators.

4. SUDBURY ARENA

You've heard of an arena be-

ing referred to as a barn. Well, it doesn't get more barn-like – in a good way, of course – than the old Sudbury Arena, home to the OHL's Sudbury Wolves. The Northern Ontario rink, which was built in 1951, is the epitome of what a junior hockey rink should be – cozy, comfortable and fan friendly. There's a palpable sense of history in the building where, even after widespread renovations in 2007 (club seating and private boxes were added), it has retained its small-town, old-time feel.

5. YOST ICE ARENA

Opened in 1923 as a field house in Ann Arbor, Mich., for the University of Michigan Wolverines men's and women's basketball teams, Yost is now home to the university's hockey teams, having transitioned to a hockey arena in 1973. It has hosted games for the NCAA Ice Hockey Championships five times.





TYLER JOHNSON

TOP
10

RE-DRAFT PICKS

BY RYAN KENNEDY

IF THE CHICAGO BLACKHAWKS PROVED ANYTHING this past season, it's that a workhorse defenseman like Duncan Keith can cover up a lack of depth – all the way to a title. Keith is a franchise player, and it's funny to think the Hawks drafted him in the second round. He'd go much higher if we re-drafted the entire league right now, but how high? After all, he's on the wrong side of 30, and if we're looking toward the future, younger bucks must come into play. Here are the top-10 picks for a completely new NHL. Players must have skated in 2014-15 to be eligible.



1



CAREY PRICE

YES, TRADITIONAL draft wisdom says you should never take a goalie in the first round, let alone first overall, but we know what Price is: a talent who almost single-handedly dragged the Habs to the second round of the playoffs. Not only that, he's in the prime of his career (27) and younger than Henrik Lundqvist, Pekka Rinne and Jonathan Quick.



2



DREW DOUGHTY

IT'S PRACTICALLY criminal that Doughty doesn't have a Norris Trophy yet, though settling for two Stanley Cups and two Olympic gold medals probably gets him through the night. He had the best advanced stats in the NHL, despite being on a non-playoff team. His 29 minutes of ice time was just seconds behind Ryan Suter, and Doughty is still just 25.



3



ERIK KARLSSON

HERE'S THE guy taking all of Doughty's Norris Trophies. Also 25 years old, Karlsson was just a shade behind Doughty in ice time, but he put up a bunch more points, hence the end-of-season award. He's the captain of the Senators and a tremendous rushing threat. If only he killed penalties, then he'd have it all.



4



TYLER JOHNSON

TAMPA'S CUP final unravelled once Johnson's broken wrist limited his effectiveness, but he still led the playoffs in scoring. The 24-year-old center had a great regular season, too, ticking off advanced stats and box score numbers along the way. And he's just entering his prime.



5



VICTOR HEDMAN

ANOTHER STAR defenseman, Hedman is a 6-foot-6, 230-pound beast who skates like he's 5-foot-11, 180. His reach, defensive game and rushing ability were on full display in the Stanley Cup final. And like his Tampa teammate Johnson, he's only 24, so he's got a lot of hockey left in him.



6



JONATHAN TOEWS

MR. EVERYTHING, Toews is a consummate winner with multiple Cups and Olympic golds. He's renowned for his leadership, faceoff prowess and is excellent in both the offensive and defensive zones. Toss in the fact that he's still just 27 and you have quite the catch.



7



JOHN TAVARES

ONCE A draft phenom himself, Tavares has lived up to the hype, becoming a franchise player on a team that has grown around him. This year, he missed out on a scoring title by one point and won the majority of his draws. He's good in the analytics department and is still only 24.



8



SIDNEY CROSBY

NO WAY we keep him off this list, even if he is the oldest of the bunch, turning 28 in August. Crosby has also dealt with injuries in his career, but only mumps could slow him down this season. Otherwise, he's still a tremendous offensive force on the ice and an advanced stats driver.



9



TYLER SEGUIN

HIS CHEMISTRY with Jamie Benn since coming to Dallas has been excellent, and Seguin himself has quickly become a premier NHL center. Not only does he have a Cup ring already, but there's a ton of time to get even better, since he's only 23.



10



STEVEN STAMKOS

THE LEAGUE is built around defensemen and centers. And even though Stamkos shifted to wing during the playoffs, he's still one of the NHL's major scoring threats down the middle at age 25.

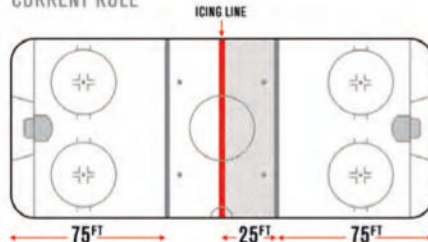
HONORABLE MENTIONS: Jamie Benn, Vladimir Tarasenko and Patrick Kane. Sorry, wingers.



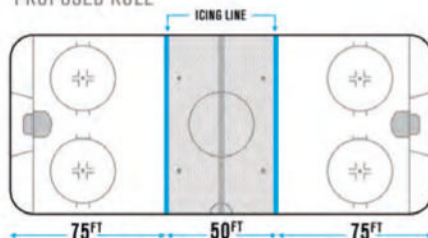
OPEN UP AND SAY...

Ahhhh. Moving the icing line would, in theory, give the game neutral-zone breathing room.

CURRENT RULE



PROPOSED RULE



TOP 5 RULE CHANGES

Damn you, coaches. It's time for another round of fixes to open up, and speed up, a game that's again become bogged down

WELL, THAT POST-season was underwhelming. Come to think of it, so was the regular season. At 5.03 and 5.32 goals per game, respectively, the two parts of 2014-15 combined to create yet another low-scoring campaign, capped by a Stanley Cup final in which just 23 goals (3.83 per game) were scored.

Traditionalists like to trumpet scoring chances as a better indicator of excitement than goals, but follow the logic here. It stands to reason more goals require more scoring chances, hence more excitement. So let's dump that dumb argument and find a way to give fans what they really want: more goals.

Prior to the playoffs, this writer floated an idea to Kris King, vice-president of hockey operations, and Stephen

Walkom, senior vice-president and director of officiating, at the NHL. Neither offered any feedback, but at least they were willing to hear it out. "We have a lot of 'interesting' GMs," King said. "So your idea might not be as crazy as you think."

That crazy idea targets the suffocating defensive strategies of coaches by making this rule change: *move the icing line back for each team to its own blueline.*

As the rule stands, teams on offense have to navigate a 25-foot minefield of defenders between the red line and the blueline to get into the offensive zone. That compressed space is critical, because teams on offense have to negate an icing while avoiding an offside – all within one-eighth of the length of the ice. And coaches are exploiting that space defensively.

Teams on defense only need

to defend the 25 feet between the red line and their own blueline. Under this change, they would have to cover the entire neutral zone.

Now, many of you are probably thinking, "Wouldn't this turn the NHL into a dump-and-chase game?" Why would it? Just because the option is there to dump the puck in earlier doesn't mean teams on offense would use it. But the option alone would force teams on defense to defend against it.

As things are, defensive formations are set up width-wise. To maintain possession through the neutral zone, teams on offense have to beat as many as five defenders lined up across the rink. Setting icing at each team's own blueline would stretch defensive formations length-wise, forcing teams on defense to guard the entire 50-foot neutral zone. This would increase the chances of getting through those formations and into the offensive zone. "If I perceive the concept correctly, I could see in principle that your proposal might generate the potential for increased and sustained pressure both inside the attacking blueline and on the forecheck," said former

NHL referee Kerry Fraser via email. "It might also open up the neutral zone for quick transition and stretch passes."

With a more open neutral zone, teams on offense would be more likely to carry the puck through it. And thanks to analytics like SAT and USAT, statistics strongly suggest puck possession is a huge part of what makes a successful team, so moving the icing line would favor clubs that hold onto the puck.

This rule change isn't without precedent. The WHA experimented with a variation of it during the pre-season (though it never made it into regular season games) for power plays by making short-handed teams cross their own blueline to negate an icing.

Changing the icing rule works in theory, so it's worth putting it into practice by testing it in the minor leagues or at a research and development camp. We're not talking NBA-style scoring here, just a return to pre-Dead Puck Era levels, so please don't pound the table with that absurd argument, either. A few more goals per game means many more scoring chances means even more excitement. Everyone wins. **TAM**



FACEOFF PUCK-TOSS



Is there a fan out there who likes it when a linesman stands up from his faceoff squat to signifying one of the centers is being thrown out of the circle? Here's a new rule guaranteed to fix that time hog. Give each team one warning (or one

center tossed from the faceoff dot) per period. From that point on, have the linesman throw the puck in the direction of the non-offending team. Immediately, you'll see centers around the league line up straight and battle for the puck drop fairly. And because of that, you'll see fewer delays from centers who make a living by cheating.

- BRIAN COSTELLO



BIGGER NETS

A couple decades ago, the notion of bigger nets was considered virtual treason. Today, it's more akin to a parking fine. This idea to help inject more offense isn't universally loved, but enough minds have been opened that it's at least not a criminal offense to air it. Which stands to reason. Everything in the game has changed since the NHL was born a century ago, either via mandate or organically. Sticks are curved and no longer wooden. Goalies wear masks and are allowed to fall to the ice. And they're mammoth,

thanks to genetics and gear. Pick a facet of the game and it's been altered – except for the 4 x 6 nets. Our shinny forefathers either got it perfect the first time or it's time to consider expansion of another kind. If Vegas can get a team, why not bigger nets? **- JASON KAY**



ICING ALL THE TIME

The NHL was every bit as socialistic with rule changes nearly 80 years ago as it is today. The league implemented the icing rule in 1937 because, in the words of Boston Bruins GM Art Ross, "We want to stop purely defensive hockey. We want to give the public the most for its money." But then he went on to

say, "but we can't tax players beyond their physical limits, nor make the game too strenuous for comparatively small squads." And that led to the ridiculous caveat that allows teams killing a penalty to ice the puck with impunity. Think about it. Team A gets penalized for breaking the rules, and the sentence for that is playing a man short for two minutes or until the opposing team scores. Then, that sentence is



REF IN THE PRESS BOX



There's nothing more infuriating than when the ref farthest

from the action calls a penalty in a game (he's often wrong). While there are benefits to the two-ref system, the confusion that sometimes arises when there's more than one sheriff skating around is not one of them. But instead of reverting to the old days, why not just utilize an eye in the sky?

Putting a referee in the press box would clear up any confusion on the ice and allow

for a more accurate game to be called. Think about all the dirty things that happen away from the puck. All the cheap shots would be caught and too-many-men calls would be easier, too. Does it make the game more black-and-white? Absolutely, and only cheaters will complain.

As for the practical aspect, there are simple technologies that would allow for communication with the on-ice ref – or the upstairs official could have a unique buzzer that would chime throughout the rink and stop play. (How cool would that be?) **- RYAN KENNEDY**



TOP 5 COACHES ON THE HOT SEAT

BY MIKE BROPHY

A QUICK SCAN OF Bruce Boudreau's coaching accomplishments suggests he'd be a hot commodity should he find himself on the free market.

He achieved 100 wins quicker than any of his predecessors in Anaheim, doing

it in 169 games. He hit the 300-win plateau faster than anyone else in the modern era, managing it in 496 games. He had more wins in his first 300 games behind the bench of an NHL team, with 184, than any coach in NHL history.

Oh yeah, Boudreau also has the highest points percentage of any current coach at .664.



BRUCE BOUDREAU

Not bad considering Scotty Bowman, the greatest NHL coach ever, retired with a .657 points percentage.

Yet when 2015-16 opens, Boudreau will be on the hot seat. Despite three straight

division titles, Anaheim has failed to reach the Stanley Cup final. In fact, the Ducks have dropped three consecutive Game 7s – at home, no less.

Here are four other coaches under extra pressure:

MIKE YEO MINNESOTA WILD

Yeo came close to buying it last season, his fourth behind the bench of the Wild. Only a strong performance from goaltender Devan Dubnyk saved his bacon.

CLAUDE JULIEN BOSTON BRUINS

Despite a Stanley Cup in 2011 and 95 wins over the past two campaigns combined, Julien is on thin ice after failing to make the playoffs this past season.

KEN HITCHCOCK ST. LOUIS BLUES

Being given a one-year contract isn't exactly a glowing endorsement of the veteran bench boss. All eyes will be on 'Hitch' after another early playoff exit.

MIKE JOHNSTON PITTSBURGH PENGUINS

Any team with Sidney Crosby and Evgeni Malkin should win at least one round. GM Jim Rutherford won't hesitate to change coaches if the Pens hit a skid.

TOP 5 TEAMS TO MAKE THE JUMP

BY MIKE BROPHY

AFTER COLUMBUS made the playoffs for just the second time in club history in 2013-14, many people felt this past season would be a breakout year for the Blue Jackets. Many people were wrong. Columbus finished 11th in the Eastern Conference and once again missed the playoffs.

Chalk it up to a number of things, but most of all injuries. The Blue Jackets led the NHL in man games lost with 508.

Columbus has considerable talent up front with the likes of Ryan Johansen, new captain Nick Foligno, Scott Hartnell, Boone Jenner and Cam Atkinson. The addition of Gregory

Campbell and Brandon Saad, who have won three Stanley Cups between them, is huge.

With those new faces and a healthy lineup, the Jackets are primed to break out again. Here are four more teams that should also make significant jumps in 2015-16:



RYAN JOHANSEN



2. EDMONTON OILERS

Connor McDavid gives the franchise credibility. Goalie Cam Talbot and blueliners Andrej Sekera, Eric Gryba and Griffin Reinhart will shore up the porous defense.



3. BUFFALO SABRES

Adding Jack Eichel, Evander Kane, Ryan O'Reilly, David Legwand, Jamie McGinn and goalie Robin Lehner can only mean a much-improved Sabres team.



4. WASHINGTON CAPITALS

The Capitals have been a work in progress since, well, forever. But right wingers Justin Williams and T.J. Oshie will make them the beasts of the East.



5. COLORADO AVALANCHE

The Avs may not be as good as they appeared in '13-14, but they aren't as bad as they were in '14-15. Time for a little Patrick Roy magic once again.

TOP
10

2016 DRAFT RANKS

BY RYAN KENNEDY

AFTER THE BREATHLESS SWELL THAT surrounded the 2015 draft, the kids rolling out next year have a tough act to follow. But the early returns indicate some pretty intriguing players. And with Arizona likely in rebuild, at least one potential homegrown phenom.

1 AUSTON MATTHEWS C, U.S. NTDP (USHL)

BORN AND raised in Scottsdale, Ariz., Matthews didn't just beat Jack Eichel's numbers with the NTDP, he beat the record set by Patrick Kane.

2 JESSE PULJUJARVI RW, KARPAT OULU (FIN.)

ONE OF the most exciting Finnish prospects in a generation, Puljujarvi is a big kid with a sizzling goal-scorer's touch.

3 JAKOB CHYCHRUN D, SARNIA (OHL)

FLORIDA-BORN and raised, Chychrun is a man-child blueliner who can rush the puck with devastating offensive results.

4 MATTHEW TKACHUK LW, U.S. NTDP (USHL)

KEITH'S KID was Matthews' linemate and will head to OHL London, where his smart game and big frame will cause problems for opponents.

5 SEAN DAY D, MISSISSAUGA (OHL)

AN EXCEPTIONAL-status player who joined the OHL at 15, Day is a big kid with incredible skating prowess.

6 MAX JONES LW, U.S. NTDP (USHL)

A NASTY, competitive power forward who will join Tkachuk in London. Some have dubbed Jones an 'American Lawson Crouse.'

7 TYLER BENSON LW, VANCOUVER (WHL)

STRONG KID with some great wheels who will get a chance to shine in the WHL with the Giants.

8 SAM STEEL C, REGINA (WHL)

IMPRESSED SCOUTS with his hockey sense and ability to make plays at high speeds.

9 LOGAN BROWN C, WINDSOR (OHL)

AT 6-FOOT-5, 215 pounds already, Brown is the type of big pivot teams covet. He has a hard shot, too.

10 KIEFFER BELLOWS C, SIOUX FALLS (USHL)

THE BOSTON U. commit will join the NTDP next season, where his highlight-reel goal skills will come in handy.

TOP
5

EMERGING NATIONS

BY RYAN KENNEDY



IT'S NO LONGER SHOCKING WHEN SWITZERLAND knocks off Russia at the world juniors or scares the pants off of Canada at the worlds, but that's recent history. When Latvia almost ended the Canadians' Olympic hopes in Sochi, eyebrows were raised. That's why the tiny Baltic nation leads off our ranking of emerging countries to watch.



1. LATVIA

As evidenced by the all-star ballot bonanza surrounding Buffalo's Zemgus Girgensons, we know Latvians love their hockey. And they're starting to get good at it. There was the impressive Olympic showing that saw them knock off the Swiss before bowing doggedly to Canada, plus recent draft success that saw six nationals taken in the past three classes, including three in 2015. The Latvians haven't played in the top tier of the world juniors since 2013, but look for them to be favorites to get promoted this year.



2. DENMARK

It's all about the high end for the Danes. Nikolaj Ehlers, a likely rookie for the Winnipeg Jets next season, and Oliver Bjorkstrand (Columbus) were a two-man highlight reel explosion at the world juniors and helped the national squad win its first game ever at the competition.



3. BELARUS

The Kostitsyn brothers and Mikhail Grabovski put the nation on the map, but work has continued, and this year the squad will play in the top tier at the world juniors. Flames pick Pavel Karnaukhov will lead the way.



4. NORWAY

Though the Norwegians haven't done much on big stages lately, there are still prospects coming up, such as Columbus pick Markus Soberg, and Mats Zuccarello has become an integral part of the New York Rangers in recent years.



5. CHINA

Here's the one to watch with a long-term view. The most populous country on Earth just had its first NHL draft pick when Andong Song was taken by the New York Islanders, and the national under-18 team had another intriguing player in 1998-born Rudi Ying, who is draft eligible in 2016.

5 ICONS WHO WE LOST

BY **STU HACKEL**

JEAN BELIVEAU

on the seatback. Often vacant (only his widow, Elise, would sit in it), a spotlight illuminated it.

Beliveau's on-ice accomplishments are the stuff of legend: 10 Cups, a record five as captain, a 10-time all-star, two Hart Trophies and the first Conn Smythe winner. He retired in 1971 as Montreal's all-time leading scorer and the NHL's greatest playoff scorer.

Off the ice, his dignity and humility were equally legendary. As a Habs executive for decades afterward, he put his energy into charitable efforts that raised millions, largely for children's medical causes. To many, as Yvan Cournoyer expressed in his eulogy at his teammate's funeral, Beliveau always remained their captain.

Following Beliveau's death at 83, the Canadiens remodelled his Bell Centre seat, displaying his No. 4

ELMER LACH

In 1950, Red Wings GM Jack Adams called Lach "the meanest, shrewdest, nastiest so-and-so in the league," and then said, "There's nobody in hockey today I'd rather have on my club."

Hardly big at 5-foot-10, 165 pounds, Lach centered Rocket Richard and Toe Blake on Montreal's prolific 'Punch Line.' He won the Stanley Cup three times, the Art Ross Trophy twice and the Hart once. He retired in 1954 as the NHL's all-time leading scorer.

His combativeness often resulted in injury. He broke his jaw multiple times, fractured his skull and had his nose busted seven times. After scoring the 1953 Cup-winner in OT, he leaped into the Rocket's arms and broke his nose again. That one didn't hurt as much.

Lach was the oldest living ex-NHLer when he died at 97.

PAT QUINN

There wasn't much that Quinn, who died at 71, didn't accomplish in hockey: hard rock defenseman, NHL coach and GM, team president, Canada's gold medal winning coach in multiple international competitions and president of the Hall of Fame.

Never a Stanley Cup winner, Quinn nevertheless guided two teams to the final, the 1980 Flyers and the 1994 Canucks.

He was admired and beloved throughout the game. But he might be remembered most for his bodycheck that knocked out Bobby Orr April 2, 1969. He was playing for the Leafs when he KO'ed Orr, a controversial slam that some Bruins fans still contend was elbowing. A smiling Quinn had one word for them: "shoulder."

MARCEL PRONOVOST

Pronovost's NHL career started in the 1950 playoffs, when Detroit called him up as a rookie. He won the Cup that year and went on to win three more with the Wings. A strong skating defenseman who regularly moved the puck out of danger, Pronovost routinely delivered huge bodychecks. "He was just like an elm tree out there," wrote Wings physician Dr. John Finley in his book *Hockeytown Doc*. "He was just as strong as an ox. Guys would skate down, they would hit him and bounce off."

Pronovost won a fifth Cup with Toronto in '67, then retired. As a longtime scout with New Jersey, he won three more Cups.

J.P. PARISE

The moment the expansion Islanders matured was authored by Parise, whose goal at 11 seconds of overtime eliminated the rival Rangers in the first round of the 1975 playoffs. It sparked an unlikely run to the semifinal, and Isles GM Bill Torrey later called it "the most important goal in franchise history."

Parise was already a top NHLer when Torrey acquired him in '75, having twice represented the North Stars in All-Star Games and been selected for Team Canada '72 in the historic Summit Series.

After finishing his playing career as North Stars captain, Parise became hockey director at the prestigious Minnesota prep school Shattuck-St. Mary's. Among those who have played in the program are Sidney Crosby, Jonathan Toews and Parise's son Zach.

**PARTY IN THE BACK**

For a chunk of his career, Jagr was known for his sick mullet in addition to his slick hands.

TOP
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JAGR MOMENTS

Although an old man by NHL standards, Jagr can still keep up with the kids. Expect him to add to this list of legendary moments

BY MATT LARKIN

IT'S SCARY ENOUGH that legendary Czech right winger Jaromir Jagr, 43, just completed his 21st NHL season. It's even scarier that he says he wants to play until he's 50. He's given us little reason to doubt him, though. He closed out 2014-15 with 18 points in 20 games after joining the Florida Panthers via trade. Jagr re-upped with them for another year and was bold enough to prophesy a Stanley Cup in 2015-16. Jagr being Jagr. To honor one of the game's greatest players and personalities ever, we present our favorite Jagr moments.

1. FIRST CUP

Jagr went fifth overall to the Pittsburgh Penguins in 1990 and wasted little time making an impact. He went directly to the NHL and scored 27 goals. His 13 points in the 1991 playoffs are the most ever by a player who began a season at 18 years old. He notched his first career over-

time winner with a superhuman show of strength to fend off John MacLean of the New Jersey Devils in the first round. Jagr and the Penguins went on their first Stanley Cup.

2. OLYMPIC GOLD

The Czech Republic, led by virtually unbeatable goalie Dominik Hasek, beat out favorites Canada and the U.S. in the NHL's first official Olympic go-round, with Jagr notching five points in six games. The nation's triumph was so significant it became a Czech opera, Nagano, with Jagr and Hasek among the featured characters.

3. SECOND CUP

Jagr played a bigger role as a sophomore during Pittsburgh's second straight championship season, especially in the 1992 playoffs. He exploded for 11 goals and 24 points in 21 games, dominating on a line with Mario Lemieux and Kevin Stevens. The exclamation point: an unbeliev-

able goal during the final, in which Jagr undressed three Blackhawks before beating goalie Ed Belfour with a backhand.

4. 700TH GOAL

On March 1, 2014, Jagr became the seventh player in league history to score 700 goals. Fittingly, he did it against the New York Islanders, the team he's scored the most against in his career. Jagr, then 42, became the oldest player to reach 60 points in a season a few weeks later.

5. HART TROPHY

Jagr's one MVP carried special weight because it felt so overdue. He'd already won two scoring titles and finished second in Hart voting twice. Finally, after leading the league in points a third time, with 127 in 81 games, Jagr captured the Hart in 1999.

6. SCORING TITLES

From 1980-81 to 2000-01, only three players won the Art Ross Trophy: Wayne Gretzky, Mario Lemieux and Jagr. Gretzky did it 10 times, Lemieux six and Jagr five. Talk about elite company for No. 68. Jagr almost

won a sixth in 2005-06, coming back from the dead with 123 points after several years of decline and finishing two points behind Joe Thornton.

7. 2 GOALS, 18 SECONDS

Jagr left to spend three years in the KHL and rejoined the NHL in 2011-12 at an age when most players are long retired. Midway through a 54-point season with the Flyers, and days after turning 40, Jagr sniped two goals in 18 seconds. The coolest part: he did it against the Penguins.

8. THE SALUTES

Hockey players rarely mimic football players in their pageantry after scoring, but Jagr was an exception. He brought fans to their feet every time he removed a glove for his trademark salute. Any purist who didn't like it just didn't like fun, evidently.

9. HIS SIT-DOWN GOAL

How many players in the history of the game could split the defense, get tripped up, then bat the puck out of mid-air from a sitting position to beat Philly's Ron Hextall? Jagr and...

10. THE MULLET

We can't pinpoint the day Jagr first asked a barber to turn the front of his mop into business and keep the party going in the back. It probably happened in the late 1980s. But it was magical and spawned one of hockey's most iconic haircuts.

TOP
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DYNASTIES

BY DOMINIK LUSZCZYSZYN



IN A SPORTS CONTEXT, THE WORD ‘DYNASTY’ implies continued dominance over a long stretch of time. But dominance is relative to the competition. What makes a run truly impressive isn’t just Cups per year or Cup streaks, it’s about how challenging they were to win.

Which brings us to the Chicago Blackhawks, who have won three Stanley Cups in six years. When looking at the relative strength of playoff teams, parity is at an all-time high. For Chicago, that has meant more great teams to get through and fewer cakewalks. Almost every team is on equal ground, which wasn’t true of the playoffs in the earlier days of the NHL. There’s also the fact teams have to play four rounds now instead of two or three.

To figure out just how tough the Hawks have had it, we measured the level of parity among playoff teams for every season since 1943 by separating teams into two categories based on goal differential: elite teams (top 15 percent) and the field. Then we took the average of both groups over a six-year period and figured out how likely it was that an elite team would win the Cup or face the Cup winner sometime in the playoffs based on the prior 20 seasons. Then we combined those two facts to get an estimate of an “average” Cup winner and their opponents’ true talent win percentage.

Knowing the relative strength of the field, it’s possible to calculate just how hard it has been to win a Cup in any given year and then estimate the difficulty of becoming one of the NHL’s greatest dynasties. In Chicago’s case, it’s about a 1-in-10 shot per year, which means an almost 1-in-100 chance of winning three in six seasons.

In those terms, what the Hawks have done is remarkable and ranks them among the five greatest dynasties of all-time. **TW**

START	END	TEAM	CUPS	YEARS	CUP ODDS	DYNASTY ODDS
1964	1979	Montreal Canadiens	10	15	30.8%	0.4%
1979	1983	New York Islanders	4	4	25.2%	0.4%
1983	1990	Edmonton Oilers	5	7	24.9%	1.1%
2009	-	Chicago Blackhawks	3	6	9.6%	1.3%
1955	1960	Montreal Canadiens	5	5	47.5%	2.4%



TOP
5

WORLD CUP OF HOCKEY MOMENTS

BY MIKE BROPHY

THEO FLEURY ALWAYS wanted the puck in big games. “Damn right I did,” he said. “That’s why we play the game.”

Fleury scored many big goals in his illustrious career, few bigger than the one he got in the semifinal of the 1996 World Cup of Hockey against Sweden to put Canada into the final against the United States. That goal, scored at 19:47 of the second overtime period, ended the longest game in international hockey history. “Paul Coffey started the play, and I was trailing him when he lost the puck,” Fleury recalled. “I got it and fired a muffin that Tommy Salo kindly let in.”

Here are four more golden moments from the previous two World Cup tournaments.

2. AMONTE’S WINNER

Tony Amonte was rewarded for his hard work when he popped in a rebound from a Derian Hatcher shot past Curtis Joseph to put the United States ahead 3-2 with 2:35 remaining in the third to give the United States the first World Cup title.

3. KOIVU CONNECTS

Saku Koivu’s goal with three minutes and change remaining in the third period lifted Finland to a 2-1 win over the United States and gave the Finns a berth in the 2004 final against Canada. “This is the greatest moment in Finnish ice hockey,” said Teemu Selanne after the game.

4. DON’T DOUBT DOAN

After Finland tied the game 2-2 late in the second period, Shane Doan answered back, just 34 seconds into the third, beating Miikka Kiprusoff to secure Canada’s championship in the 2004 gold medal game.

5. VINNY’S VALUE

Vincent Lecavalier’s goal at 3:45 of overtime in the semifinal against the Czech Republic sent Canada to the final against Finland in 2004. Czech goalie Tomas Vokoun stopped a shot by Ryan Smyth and then the rebound by Lecavalier who fanned on a second attempt. Third time lucky, though, as Lecavalier connected from a sharp angle to give Canada the win.

2015 SKATE BUYER'S GUIDE

A Step Ahead

By RACHEL VILLARI

Being a step ahead – physically and mentally – makes the best players the best. Truly lethal is a combination of skill and speed, but being able to think as fast as your feet are moving elevates play to a whole other level.

These five skaters best exemplify how fast the game has become. Light years ahead of their peers, they widen the gap with their powerful stride and prolific foresight.

ALEX OVECHKIN Topping new statistical data collected but not yet popularized by PowerScout Hockey, Ovechkin has a top acceleration speed that reaches an unparalleled 9.50m/s². For the average fan, this means 'Ovie' can kick off and cover around 15.6 feet in a single second. Daunting.

If that's not impressive enough, his third consecutive and fifth career Rocket Richard trophy should be enough to convince you that this guy operates on another level. Eleventh in the league in hits this past season, Ovie is like a downhill freight train, skating with reckless abandon and shoveling pucks into the net.

ERIK KARLSSON Highlight seasons for Karlsson are bookmarked with Norris Trophies. The first time he earned the award was following 2011-12, in which he collected 78 points. The past two seasons he has been the driving force behind the Sens, topping their scoring and singlehandedly eating up ice time. His average time on ice per game is around 27 minutes, with the nearest teammate skating merely 22.

Karlsson isn't just fast, nor does he just lead the offense from behind the blueline. The captain does it all.

TYLER JOHNSON,
TAMPA BAY LIGHTNING'S
LEADING SCORER

TYLER JOHNSON The undrafted, unlikely, small center from Spokane, Wash., climbed his way to the top of a stacked and speedy Stanley Cup contender much like the way he found the net this season. Tied for the team lead in scoring with Steven Stamkos, Johnson tied the two-time Rocket Richard winner with 72 points in five fewer games played.

The quick and crafty playoff favorite carried his offensive streak all the way into the Stanley Cup final, collecting a team-leading 13 goals in 26 games tearing up and down the ice.

BLAKE WHEELER No name better pre-vises than Wheeler's. The speedy right winger dominates his position by powering up the boards and through defense to rack up a surplus of 20 goals a season. Wheeler's go-to move involves claiming the puck in Winnipeg's zone, blowing through the neutral zone in a few short steps and sweeping in on

the opposing goaltender, waiting for the perfect opportunity to unleash his quick shot.

Whether it is by outwaiting a sprawling goaltender or tucking his head and blowing by staggering defensemen, Wheeler invigorates his team's supporters every time.

NATHAN MACKINNON His sophomore slump has been blown out of proportion. Lauded for his 2014 Calder Trophy campaign, MacKinnon dazzled the league with his sharp mind and blade, both having since been accused of growing dull. Growing pains won't keep Cole Harbour's second son down, however, as a closer look at the numbers reveal, MacKinnon had the best possession numbers on a lackluster Avalanche team.

Expect the 19-year-old to be back in full force next season, skating circles around the Central Division again. ■



JetSpeed Models Headline CCM 2015 Skate Line

CCM Hockey's newest skates let players take off and fly at JetSpeed.

CCM JetSpeed skates have arrived at retailers and are designed to lift players to the highest performance levels. Built on a form-fitting, ergonomic RocketFrame composite quarter package, the models have a contoured boot that wraps the foot, eliminates wiggle-room and maximizes energy transfer.

The JetSpeed skates headline the most advanced skate line in the CCM brand's 116-year history.

"What would the fastest player on the ice wear?" J.S. Bélanger, CCM Hockey's skate product manager, said. "A truly perfect-fitting skate allows players to attain maximum speed, and that was our goal in building the CCM JetSpeed.

"The foot is locked and loaded, and the player feels like they're as fast as they possibly can be."

The RocketFrame provides advanced foot support and a deep heel lock, and is made from lightweight components to maximize explosive foot speed. The boot includes CCM's heat-moldable SpeedCore 2 Plus, an updated thermo-forming system that fine-tunes the customized fit.

Inside the JetSpeed boot, the fit is snug, but natural and luxurious. A dual-zone

soft-touch liner wicks away moisture, and a durazone abrasion patch enhances comfort and increases durability.

A smooth contour comfort pad cradles the foot and multi-density memory foam pads line the ankle area. CCM's signature custom support footbed allows players to match arch support to their foot type.

JetSpeed skates introduce a JetProtect tongue constructed with multi-layers for enhanced lace bite protection. Beneath the boot is a lightweight composite midsole and an ultra-light carbon outsole with exhaust vents for ventilation.

CCM includes its SpeedBlade +4.0 holder on JetSpeed skates. The holder elevates the boot for increased blade attack angles and better turning radius. The CCM SpeedBlade Hyper-Glide polished runner adds to top speed and glide.

"Players love the sensation when they slip their foot into the CCM JetSpeed skate and take off on the ice," Bélanger said. "They also love the performance. We feel this is the skate that will allow us to reach the next level in the skate category."

Among the NHLers who have switched to the JetSpeed are Patrice Bergeron, Ryan Nugent-Hopkins, Nathan MacKinnon and Alex Galchenyuk.

CCM Tacks skates are designed for extreme acceleration and agility. The Tacks name is legendary, but current models are built on new technology — based on a fully thermoformable AttackFrame Quarter Package that stores and releases energy.

Tacks feature an aggressive forward pitch, keeping players on the balls of their feet so they can separate themselves from their competition. The skates combine a traditional, wider fit with added stiffness to give high-performance players extra torque.

NHLers in Tacks last season include John Tavares, All-Star Skills Competition Fastest Skater Jonathan Drouin, and top prospect Connor McDavid.

The CCM RibCor Skates have a tapered fit and include an updated version of the CCM Pump, the brand's signature, instant customization option. The Pump inflates air bladders to eliminate negative space in the back of the boot and give players a personalized heel lock.

RibCor skates have comfortable EPP foam that wraps around the foot and adds to the customized feel.

"CCM listened to feedback from pro players and greatly improved on the internal RibCor design," Bélanger said. "These second-generation RibCor skates are even more comfortable, powerful and agile than before."

For more information, visit ccmhockey.com or follow CCM Hockey on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube. ■



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GREAT SPEED STARTS WITH A GREAT FIT
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CLOSE FIT AND A PRECISE HEEL LOCK TO BREAK THE SOUND
BARRIER ON THE ICE.

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NHL TEAM REPORTS



FLAMES MORE THAN SMOKE

Calgary may have been lucky this past season, but smart summer moves will keep them on the ascent

BY RANDY SPORTAK

EVEN THE STUMBLING AND BUMBLING Inspector Clouseau could easily deduce reasons the Calgary Flames were at risk to take a step back.

Sure, the Flames reached the second round of the Stanley Cup playoffs this past season, but the warning signs were everywhere they could be a flash in the pan.



Look at how many players had career years in 2014-15: Jiri Hudler, Lance Bouma and Dennis Wideman to name a few. Look at how many young players made a mark, some as expected or at least considered capable – Sean Monahan and Johnny Gaudreau – but some from out of nowhere, such as Josh Jooris.

Look at all the thrilling third period comeback wins the youthful and exuberant squad completed. And for the analytics crowd, look at how their sky-high shooting percentage – second best in the NHL behind the Cup finalist Tampa Bay Lightning – somehow overcame their near-the-bottom-of-the-league possession numbers.

Nobody outside of the Stampede City would have been shocked if this coming season's Flames followed the route of the Colorado Avalanche, who went from winning the Central Division two seasons back to completely missing the Stanley Cup tournament.

At best, logic dictated, they would be in the wild card fight and maybe claim a playoff spot next spring, or maybe not.

Now, with one trade that brought in a 22-year-old rising star defenseman in Dougie Hamilton, the Flames have brought upon

THE DEEP BLUELINE

The already-impressive Flames D-corps, led by Mark Giordano, got even better this off-season.

themselves something that wasn't there before making that bold move: expectations.

By adding Hamilton to a blueline brigade that already features Mark Giordano and the underrated and unheralded T.J. Brodie and Kris Russell, prognosticators see the Flames as a team ready to take another step forward out of their rebuild.

Perhaps that's the most impressive part of last season: how in only a couple of years management appears to have torn down from the teams led by Jarome Iginla and Miikka Kiprusoff and built a young, skilled and competitive squad. Think of all the teams who have wandered in the desert for years before trending upwards.

Guess what? The Flames fully believe they've only started to trend upward. They don't hope, they believe, and expect to see it happen right away. "You want to be in a situation where more is expected," GM Brad Treliving said. "When you take a good player like Dougie and you add him to specifically our defense that has good players, the expectation is the group is going to be better. There's more expected. There's more pressure. There's all those types of things and we've all got to start living like a team that wants to be good. I think those expectations are a good thing."

Treliving's handiwork hasn't ended with adding Hamilton, either. He addressed a big hole on the opening day of free agency by signing versatile right winger Michael Frolik (most recently of Winnipeg) to play in their top three lines.

Sure, Frolik's deal – \$21.5 million over five years – may be a slight overpayment, but his age (27) fits into the plan, going against the belief the Flames may fast-track things by adding over-the-hill skaters.

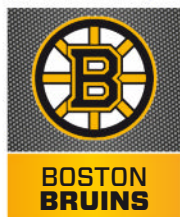
Calling the Flames a Stanley Cup contender is a stretch at this point, with their young players needing to learn a few lessons. However, the club, which was at risk to fall back down the ladder, appears ready to climb closer to the top. "When you have a little bit of success, able to get into the playoffs and win a round, it's not only what it does for you internally, but it's what it does externally," Treliving said. "People look and say, 'There might be something going on there.'" **TIN**

SWEENEY TODD

Boston's new GM hacks through the lineup to create more salary cap flexibility

BY MIKE LOFTUS

MOST BRUINS FANS WERE BREATHING A little easier by their July 4 holiday. One weekend earlier, they were breathing fire – so much that new GM Don Sweeney joked about wearing “a ball hat and a flak jacket” to improve his odds of safely making it through the airport upon his return from the NHL draft.



The cause of the fury: Sweeney had traded prized defenseman Dougie Hamilton and power forward Milan Lucic, and the closest thing to an NHL player he got in return was Martin Jones, the Kings' backup goalie. Then, he traded Jones.

Nobody wanted to hear about the first- and second-round picks Sweeney had acquired for the strong 2015 draft, and nobody cared that he tried to use some of those assets to move up toward the very top.

The heat only increased when, during a media conference call before the July 1 opening of the NHL's free agent market, Sweeney said, “I don't think it's a rebuild. We didn't strip this down.”

That was still a tough sell after July 1 – just a little more than a month after Sweeney's May 20 ascension to the post previously held by Peter Chiarelli – because a staggering eight players who spent all of 2014-15 on the Bruins roster were gone. It took the acquisition of three wingers – Jimmy Hayes and Zac Rinaldo via trades, Matt Beleskey through free agency – before people would begin to admit there might be some method to what they saw as Sweeney's madness. “What this was all about,” Sweeney said, “was gaining some (cap) flexibility, and trying to improve our team.”

The first mission was accomplished even though the B's had to retain almost half the \$6 million due to Lucic in his final season before attaining unrestricted free agency. Sweeney also sent Reilly Smith's \$3.4 million, plus the contract of injured and ef-



factively retired Marc Savard (\$4 million cap charge), to Florida for Hayes, an RFA whom Boston signed for \$2.3 million a year. Some of the savings went into the five-year, \$19-million deal that brought Beleskey to Boston and a four-year, \$11-million deal for stalwart defenseman Adam McQuaid.

Cash was also available because the Bruins, as expected, parted ways with several UFAs – including Gregory Campbell, Daniel Paille and Carl Soderberg. But even though there were rumors Hamilton had received offer sheets, nobody saw the player-for-picks trade coming.

As well as Sweeney may have done to re-

DON'T FORGET ABOUT ME

Their thought-to-be future stud D-man is gone, but the underrated Adam McQuaid is locked up.

term offers, created the perception Hamilton just didn't want to stay in Boston.

More than that, there's the hole the 22-year-old leaves behind. An elite skater and the Bruins' best puck-moving defenseman, Hamilton was considered one of the centerpieces of a team that wants to transition to a quicker, more pressure-oriented game to get with the times and boost its offense. Without Hamilton, who was tied for

“ ANY TRADE...ANY PLAYER MOVEMENT WE LOOK TO MAKE, IS ONE WE ABSOLUTELY WANT TO, AND NOT HAVE TO – Don Sweeney

plenish the depth chart at wing and stock the prospects cabinet, sending Hamilton to Calgary for the 15th, 45th and 52nd picks in the draft leaves major questions.

The fact Hamilton signed a reasonably priced deal at six years and \$34.5 million with the Flames, after the Bruins tried to open negotiations with medium and long-

the team lead with 32 assists despite missing 10 games this past season, that's going to be pretty difficult.

And what's next? “Any trade...any player movement we look to make, is one we absolutely want to, and not have to,” Sweeney said. “We have some flexibility now to look at things that way.” **THE**



THE MIDDLE MANAGEMENT

It took just one day for the Sabres to turn a void at center and in the crease into an impressive collection

THE SABRES HAVEN'T HAD A NO. 1 center since Daniel Briere and Chris Drury left in 2007. They knew they were finally getting one at the draft. They ended up with two.

In addition to selecting Jack Eichel with the No. 2 pick, the Sabres traded with Colorado for Ryan O'Reilly. They gave up a lot, including first-rounders Nikita Zadorov (2013) and Mikhail Grigorenko (2012), but it was worth it. The team has long resembled a bagel – nothing in the middle – but that changed in one night. “We did hit some targets, and that’s satisfying when you can do that,” said GM Tim Murray.

While Eichel may become a superstar, new coach Dan Bylsma wasted no time anointing O'Reilly as the first-line center. The 24-year-old shared the spotlight in Colorado with standouts Gabriel Landeskog, Nathan MacKinnon, Matt Duchene and Paul Stastny. He’s eager to become the go-to guy. “I’ve always wanted to be a big piece like that, have that leadership role and be seen as that by the management,” O'Reilly said. “If I can transfer what I know and at the same time learn new things, it’s only going to benefit the team and benefit myself.”

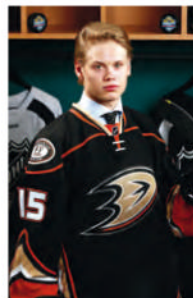
The Sabres were the worst puck-possession team in the history of Corsi this past season. O'Reilly is masterful at starting in his own zone and getting the puck out. Eichel played keep-away often at the World Championship during his first test against professionals.

If the Sabres have the puck more, wingers Evander Kane and Matt Moulson could become 30-goal scorers again. “You get really excited right now when three weeks ago you looked at our roster and it looked a lot differently,” Bylsma said.

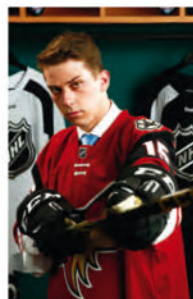
Getting Eichel and O'Reilly on draft day might have been enough for the Sabres, but they also added goalie Robin Lehner and veteran center David Legwand in a trade with Ottawa. Murray drafted Lehner, 24, and sees him growing into a No. 1. “He’s a talented, big, strong young man who is just scratching the surface,” Murray said. “Hopefully, we can bring the best out of him.”

The moves should easily get the Sabres out of 30th place, where they spent the past two seasons. “The trades we made made us better, and I feel good about it,” Murray said. “I feel much better about our team. We’ve taken big strides.” — **JOHN VOGEL**

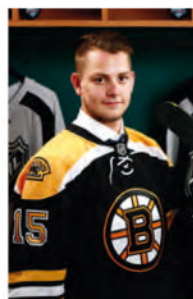
2015 1ST PICK



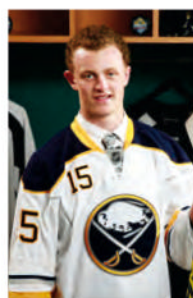
The Ducks were among the first teams to realize mobile blueliners are valuable and necessary in today’s NHL. With Cam Fowler, Sami Vatanen and Hampus Lindholm in tow, Anaheim grabbed another at No. 27. Swede **Jacob Larsson** is weak and skinny now, but he plays with the same poise and puck skills as the three mentioned.



In many other draft years, **Dylan Strome** would have gone first overall. But sharing a birth year with Connor McDavid and Jack Eichel bumped Strome to third. He’s a skilled playmaker, a dynamic scorer and a natural in the offensive zone. He also plays with a lot of smarts and charisma. He’s expected to spend another season in the OHL.



Boston emerged from the draft in a pile of rubble or rising from the ashes, depending on how its three Round 1 picks turn out. D-man **Jakub Zboril** (13th) and wingers Jake DeBrusk (14th) and Zachary Senyshyn (15th) went higher than most had them rated. Senyshyn scored 26 goals as a fourth-liner on OHL powerhouse Sault Ste. Marie.



Let the competition officially begin. **Jack Eichel** (2nd) said at the NHL combine he thought he could be better than Connor McDavid, and Eichel should have the opportunity to do that next season. The acquisition of Ryan O'Reilly from Colorado will take pressure off Eichel or Sam Reinhart to be the Sabres’ No. 1 center next season.



Though Oliver Kylington was rated an early first-rounder a year ago, a difficult season bumped him down the draft list, where the Flames grabbed him 60th. Seven picks earlier, they took another Swedish D-man with offensive instincts. **Rasmus Andersson** has outstanding puck skills and a booming shot. His feet are a bit heavy, though.



2015 1ST PICK



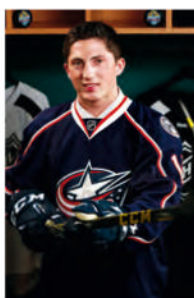
Carolina really wanted D-man **Noah Hanifin** and, as luck would have it, the sublime Boston College freshman fell to them at No. 5. Hanifin was one of the NCAA's youngest players this year, but played well beyond his age. His poise on the back end, combined with size and skating ability, made him one of the Eagles' most valuable players.



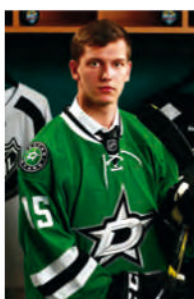
Chicago's first-round pick went to Arizona in the Antoine Vermette trade. The Hawks waited until 54th, snagging **Graham Knott**, who models his game after the Devils' Adam Henrique. Knott is a polarizing prospect. Some teams like his 6-foot-2 frame and think he can score in the NHL, but others question his complete level.



Picking **Mikko Rantanen** 10th overall took the sting out of trading Ryan O'Reilly. Rantanen is a hulking winger with a powerful shot. He played against men in his native Finland's top league the past two seasons. Avs GM Joe Sakic believes Rantanen has a chance to go right to the NHL. Colorado ranked him as a top-five or -six player.



The Jackets lost Mike Reilly to free agency, then went out and replaced him with a bigger, better version at No. 8. **Zach Werenski** was NCAA Michigan's best defenseman this season as a 17-year-old. A thinker on the blueline, Werenski is also a gifted skater and can play in all situations. He's got a big frame and has only begun his ascent.



Denis Gurianov gives Dallas a duo of big, powerful Russian wingers who can fill the net. Even before the Stars took him 12th, he drew comparisons to Dallas' 2013 first-rounder, Valeri Nichushkin. Gurianov goes hard to the crease and loves to hammer opponents with heavy hits, almost to a fault. His back-checking is said to need work.



SAAD PUTS PRIZE IN SURPRISING

Shock turned quickly to awe following Saad's trade to Columbus, which now features a ferocious forward flock

NOBODY EXPECTED BRANDON SAAD to be a casualty of the Chicago Blackhawks' salary cap woes. That includes Saad, who said he was "shocked" to be traded to the Columbus Blue Jackets, and Blue Jackets GM Jarmo Kekalainen, who said the deal for Saad "just kind of fell into our laps."

Kekalainen entered the off-season looking for a top-four defenseman and ended up acquiring a top-six forward who, at 22 years old, is one of the rising stars in the league. "You have to be ready for anything this time of year," Kekalainen said.

The Jackets traded center Artem Anisimov, right winger Marko Dano, depth forwards Jeremy Morin and Corey Tropp and a fourth-round draft pick in 2016 for Saad and prospects Michael Paliotta and Alex Broadhurst.

There was fear that Saad, a restricted free agent, would be a target for an offer sheet if the Blue Jackets didn't sign him quickly. But, on July 3, the Blue Jackets inked him to a six-year contract worth \$36 million.

Saad said his agent, Lewis Gross, negotiated only with Columbus. "I had a great experience in Chicago, and I had experiences I'll never forget," Saad said,

"But it's on to a new chapter now, a new experience. I'm excited as hell to be in Columbus and to get started."

Saad, who played 67 Stanley Cup playoff games the past three seasons and won two Cups, joins a group of young, big dynamic forwards. He and center Ryan Johansen are expected to play on the No. 1 line, with Nick Foligno a candidate to play on the right side. Add Boone Jenner, Brandon Dubinsky and Scott Hartnell to the mix and it's a big, powerful group. Plus, Johansen, Jenner and Saad are all younger than 23. One rival GM called the Blue Jackets' potential "scary."

Kekalainen had tried desperately to acquire a D-man, making offers for Dougie Hamilton before he was traded from Boston to Calgary, and extending a free agent offer to Paul Martin, who signed with San Jose. He also had trade talks with St. Louis regarding defenseman Kevin Shattenkirk.

While the Blue Jackets are waiting to upgrade the blueline, they'll enjoy having the best group of forwards in franchise history, thanks to the addition of Saad. "That's a game-changer right there," Johansen said. "It's a huge addition." — **AARON PORTZLINE**



KINGS FIND RARE HEIR

After passing on Lucic at the 2006 draft, Los Angeles finally adds coveted power winger for its first line

IN AN NHL RELYING MORE ON SPEED and skill, the Los Angeles Kings are doubling down on outmuscling the opposition, a strategy that earned them two Stanley Cups.

With the acquisition of power forward Milan Lucic from the Boston Bruins for goaltender Martin Jones, prospect Colin Miller and a first-round pick in this past June's draft, they're clearly eyeing a third. "That's the most exciting thing about moving on from Boston," Lucic said. "I get to move to a team that already knows how to win. They're not learning how to win or trying to take that step to win a Stanley Cup."

Lucic was a prototypical King before the 2006 draft. He met with them three times, and he thought they would take him with the 48th pick. L.A. selected defenseman Joey Ryan before the Bruins grabbed Lucic two picks later.

Now he's a key player on a Kings club that became the fifth team in NHL history to miss the playoffs after hoisting the Cup the year before. "In a way, it's a good thing going into next season that they didn't make the playoffs," Lucic said. "It gives the players a good chance to get their rest and get re-energized and back into tip-top shape and

refocused and hungry again to be in the playoffs and go for that Stanley Cup."

Along with 6-foot-4 Dwight King, the Kings now have two of the league's most ferocious forecheckers playing the left side. But the Kings didn't target Lucic solely for his toughness. It was also about finding a fit for the top line with stars Anze Kopitar and Marian Gaborik. GM Dean Lombardi compared his new trio to Mike Bossy, Bryan Trottier and Clark Gillies from the New York Islanders dynasty of the '80s. Lombardi sees Lucic playing the role of Gillies, a Hall of Famer who imposed his will. "There aren't many like them in the league who can play with top players and bring that element," Lombardi said. "It's that fit ideally with those two guys. That's the idea."

The move also lets captain Dustin Brown slide to the third line, which will undergo its own facelift with center Jarret Stoll not expected back after being arrested for drug possession 10 weeks before free agency. One thing for sure is the Kings want to get back to the Stanley Cup final. And they'll have a new physical force, not to mention an underrated passer and goal-scorer, leading the charge. — **TAL PINCHEVSKY**

2015 1ST PICK



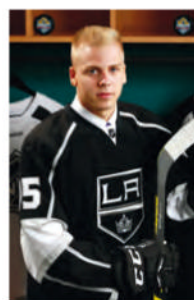
The Red Wings have had good luck with slick Russians and are counting on that continuing with left winger **Evgeny Svechnikov** (19th). But at 6-foot-2 and 200 pounds, Svechnikov is much bigger than the likes of Pavel Datsyuk and Sergei Fedorov. This year marked the first time Detroit had a first-round pick in three straight drafts since 1996.



The Oilers at one point had six of the first 86 selections. But after taking **Connor McDavid** first overall, Edmonton traded the 16th and 33rd picks to the Islanders for defenseman Griffin Reinhart. Picks 57 and 79 then went to the Rangers for goalie Cam Talbot, and pick 86 went to San Jose for the Oilers hiring coach Todd McLellan.



Ten years from now we might be talking about how the Panthers got the steal of the first round in 2015. By taking **Lawson Crouse** 11th overall, they got a ready-made NHL player and future power forward. Crouse will likely be sent back to junior next season, where he'll serve an eight-game suspension for a headshot in the OHL playoffs.



The Kings haven't picked earlier than 29th for five drafts. With their first-rounder sent to Boston in the Milan Lucic deal, they chose **Erik Cernak** 43rd overall. The Slovak is a big, physical defender who dominates in his own end. He skates well and is mobile for a teen his size, but his calling card will strictly be as a shutdown defender.



The Wild were thinking defense when they chose center **Joel Eriksson Ek** 20th overall. He isn't thought to have a sky-high ceiling, but he's an excellent two-way forward and known for his competitiveness. He owns a lethal shot, and his skating is above average. Eriksson Ek needs time to fill out but projects to be another Mikko Koivu.



2015 1ST PICK



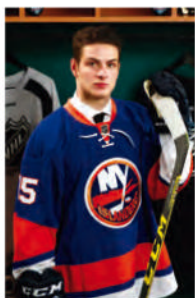
The Canadiens are set on defense for a few years, so they can afford to wait on **Noah Juulsen**, a tall, lanky defenseman who needs to add some bulk to his 6-foot-1 frame. Mostly known for his defensive abilities, Juulsen projects as a two-way type, and some scouts believe he could develop into a top-four blueliner.



Nashville didn't pick until 55th after trading its first-rounder to Toronto. **Yakov Trenin** was rated higher virtually everywhere, including 43rd in THN's Draft Preview. He was better than a point-per-game player in the QMJHL. He went from a defensive liability to a penalty killer. He moved from wing to center and flourished as a playmaker.



Scoring has been a problem in New Jersey lately, so **Pavel Zacha** at No. 6 made sense. The Devils got a power forward who plays the game with intensity and has dazzling hands. Injuries and a pair of suspensions in the OHL limited his numbers, but Zacha had already played against men in the Czech Republic, so the NHL's not far off.



Thanks to the Bruins' curious selections, New York got a gift at pick No. 16. **Matt Barzal** is an extremely talented center who went under the radar this season after missing a prolonged stretch due to an off-ice knee injury. But he ended his campaign strong at the under-18s and his playmaking prowess makes him one to watch.



With no first-rounder, Rangers scouts had to wait until pick 41 for some action when they snapped up WHL left winger **Ryan Gropp**. Gropp is fast with a 6-foot-2 frame and a wicked shot, so the real question in his future is whether he's willing to pay the price for offense. Scouts would like to see more nastiness and competitiveness.



SCORING AT SALE PRICES

After getting the bargain of the summer last season, the Preds hope to strike gold again with Hodgson

WHEN CODY HODGSON NEEDED A fresh start, he ended up exactly where Mike Ribeiro was a year earlier. Same team (the Nashville Predators). Same contract (one year, \$1.05 million). "When we arrived at the number, that's exactly what we said," Nashville GM David Poile said. "This is what we gave Ribeiro last year. That's how it worked out."

The hope for Poile and his staff is that things will work out just as well, if not better than they did the first time.

The Predators never have been among the NHL's big spenders in free agency, but for the past two years they have become bona fide bargain hunters. In 2014 and 2015 they added six new players for a grand total \$10.1 million in per year cap hit. In addition to Hodgson this off-season, they signed defenseman Barret Jackman to a two-year, \$4-million deal, the richest such deal they've given over that span.

None of last year's minimal investments provided a greater return than the one Nashville made in Ribeiro, whose contract with Arizona had been bought out amid questions about his off-ice behavior. At 35 years old, he led the Predators in assists (47), finished

second in points (62) and re-established himself as a top-end producer.

The difference with Hodgson, whose contract was bought out by Buffalo, is that he's much younger (25) and he has not shown the consistency Ribeiro had. His six goals and 13 points in 2014-15 were down from 20 and 44 from the previous season. "Hopefully I can do what (Ribeiro) did," Hodgson said. "He came in and had a great year. I just think it's a new opportunity for me like it was for him. He made the most of it."

Ribeiro re-signed for two years at \$3.5 million per season with the idea that he would be Nashville's first line center through 2016-17.

After that, Hodgson could be in position to take his place. Or he could have a long-term, high-priced deal in place with another team. Or, if things go badly, he could be in Europe or the AHL. "Cody Hodgson just sees opportunity," Poile said. "We're playing a certain style. He wants to play that style. He's upset with the year he had last year. He wants to prove everyone wrong, and he's trusting that we're going to give him that opportunity. And we will."

And it won't cost the Predators much to do so. — **DAVID BOCLAIR**



GETTING TO KNOW PHIL

Penguins brass eager to integrate sniper Kessel into their star-studded lineup

GIVEN HIS SCHOLARLY DEMEANOR, Mike Johnston didn't get caught up in the shock wave of Pittsburgh's big off-season trade. That doesn't mean the Penguins coach was unmoved by the acquisition of sniper Phil Kessel from Toronto.

While some had stars – or maybe question marks – in their eyes, Johnston had goals on the brain. Pittsburgh acquired a world-class winger to play with one of its star centers, Sidney Crosby or Evgeni Malkin. Not a prospect with unlimited potential, not an aging star hoping to catch fire once more, but an established finisher with five 30-goal seasons still in his prime at 27, two months younger than Crosby. “That was a need we had as a team,” Johnston said. “I just know his speed, his shot. His speed, whether it's off the rush, in the offensive zone or on the power play, all three of those he has an ability to help us. Today's game is all about speed.”

Kessel was a little less reserved, especially about the prospect of wearing matching sweaters with Crosby and Malkin. “They're probably the two best players in the world,” he told the Pittsburgh *Tribune-Review*. “I'm thrilled to

be able to get to play with them.”

Johnston and GM Jim Rutherford claim they won't determine whether Kessel will line up to the right of Crosby or Malkin until training camp. That won't be the only big question enveloping Kessel, whose resume is stocked not only with goals but also with questions about his work ethic and attitude.

Rutherford repeatedly noted that he and his staff did “a lot of homework” and were satisfied they weren't getting a player laden with baggage, mostly because Kessel will have less pressure as one of many luminaries on his new club. “There's going to be a lot less media attention in Pittsburgh,” Kessel told the *Tribune-Review*. “I'm real excited to be there.”

Johnston, favoring personal impressions over preconceived notions, is taking the same approach he used when he took the job last summer and met with players individually – even travelling to Moscow to engage Malkin. “What I want to do is get to know Phil as a person, talk to him, see what makes him tick,” Johnston said. “In coaching – it's the same with the Steelers or Pirates – you try and get the most out of each player.” – **SHELLY ANDERSON**

2015 1ST PICK



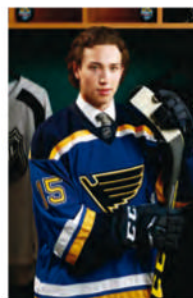
Dealing goalie Robin Lehner to Buffalo gave the Senators two first-round picks. **Thomas Chabot** (18th) emerged as a stud defenseman in the QMJHL, and Colin White (21st) of the U.S. under-18 program projects as a two-way forward. After struggling through injuries last season, he was a force at the under-18 World Championship.



Though the Flyers' pipeline is defender-heavy already, it would have been difficult to pass on **Ivan Provorov** at No. 7. The consensus best defensive D-man in the draft, Provorov also put up a bunch of points in the WHL. He plays with a great physical edge and has a high hockey IQ. Some GMs thought he was the best blueliner in the whole draft.



In terms of raw offensive talent, some scouts put **Daniel Sprong** (46th) right behind Connor McDavid and Jack Eichel in this draft. But before Pens fans get too excited, let it be stated the gifted right winger still needs to work on his overall game. Born and raised in Amsterdam, he moved to Montreal as a youth to further his hockey career.

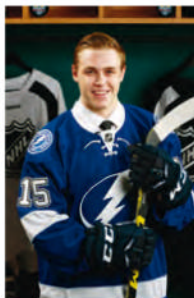


The Blues picked just twice in the top 100, starting with **Vince Dunn** 56th. Dunn, who idolizes Drew Doughty, improved a lot as an offensive D-man this season. More importantly, his coach and GM in OHL Niagara, Marty Williamson, singled him out for shutting down Erie's Connor McDavid. By year's end, Dunn was a trusted two-way force.

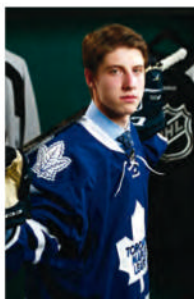


Picking in the top 10 for the first time since '07, San Jose chose a player similar to its ninth overall pick that year. Like Logan Couture, **Timo Meier** (9th) oozes hockey sense and carries a big shot. Meier is a solid Swiss winger who is strong on the puck and has excellent instincts. His goal total in the QMJHL rose from 17 a year ago to 44.

2015 1ST PICK



Without a first-rounder for the first time in eight years, Tampa waited until the second round to select **Mitchell Stephens** 33rd overall. Stephens, a center, did not put up great numbers in the OHL but had a strong under-18 World Championship. Matthew Spencer, taken 44th, was a solid defenseman on a weak Peterborough team.



Toronto president Brendan Shanahan joked after the draft he could keep tabs on fourth-overall pick **Mitch Marner** "because I know the guy who owns his junior team." That would be Leafs director of player personnel Mark Hunter, who developed Marner with OHL London. Marner draws comparisons to Claude Giroux and Patrick Kane.



As a rookie GM last year, Jim Benning loaded up on offense in the first round with Jake Virtanen and Jared McCann. The Canucks added another scoring winger with great intensity in 2015: **Brock Boeser** 23rd overall. The Minnesota native is sure to spend two or three seasons with North Dakota in the NCAA. His physical play needs work.



Conventional wisdom says you never take a goalie in the first round, but the Caps have been bold before and won. Is **Ilya Samsonov** (22nd) the next Semyon Varlamov? If any team can get the Russian over here after his KHL contract runs out in three years, it's Washington. If all goes to plan, it will get a big, quick, focused netminder.



The already-stacked Jets picked twice in the first round, dipping into the USHL both times, with **Kyle Connor** 17th and Jack Roslovic 25th. Many scouts rated Connor near the top 10. He's a burner, likened to an American Marian Gaborik. Connor and top Jets prospect Nikolaj Ehlers could be the NHL's fastest forward tandem someday.



CLUTCH COMES TO WASHINGTON

The Capitals can't win when it matters most. So they're betting on a man whose Game 7 prowess is renowned

JUSTIN WILLIAMS HAS WON. HE HAS three Stanley Cups. He has contributed winning goals in decisive play-off games. He has accomplished everything the Washington Capitals have not in their checkered 40-year history.

Maybe Williams can help change that after signing a two-year, \$6.5-million contract with the Caps. A team with a 4-10 record in Game 7s, including this year's second-round, season-ending overtime loss to the New York Rangers, just added a right winger who is 7-0 in those games during his 14-year career.

Washington was close to an Eastern Conference final appearance in 2015. Williams, 33, believes the pieces are in place to take the next step. "I liked the way the team played," Williams said. "They were exciting to watch, and they played hard. I want to be a part of a team that has that type of attitude."

Those traits defined Williams during his time with the Los Angeles Kings. He won the 2014 Conn Smythe Trophy with nine goals and 25 points in the post-season.

Washington has yet to make it past the second round with star left winger Alex Ovechkin, three times losing Game 7s when they could have advanced to

the conference final with a win.

Williams had a late offer to stay with the Kings, and the Montreal Canadiens wanted him, too. But a tight free agent market, salary cap issues in Los Angeles and signing with a contending team tilted Williams toward the Caps.

He wasn't Washington's only move during free agency, either. It also made a trade with St. Louis for T.J. Oshie, a skilled winger who could be a perfect fit next to Ovechkin and Nicklas Backstrom on the top line. Oshie has two years left on his contract and came at the price of veteran Troy Brouwer, a third-round draft pick and goalie prospect Phoenix Copley.

But with a \$4.2-million salary cap hit, Oshie is only marginally more expensive than Brouwer (\$3.7 million). Oshie and Williams combine to upgrade the right side for the Caps, who expect the pair to mix with Ovechkin, Backstrom and younger, talented forwards Evgeny Kuznetsov, Marcus Johansson and Andre Burakovsky to form one of the NHL's best top sixes. "It's a team that had a really good chance of winning a Stanley Cup last year," Oshie said. "I'm just excited to be included as a piece of the puzzle." — **BRIAN McNALLY**

PROSPECT REPORT



JACOB MARKSTROM

REALLY READY FOR PRIME TIME

Markstrom has been a perennial prospect the past seven years. Now an NHL job has opened for him in Vancouver

BY JOHN PITARRESI

JACOB MARKSTROM HAS COME A long, long way in his hockey career. But not in the favorable sense you'd expect from that sort of expression.

He came to North America from Gavle, Sweden as a 20-year-old and the No. 2 NHL prospect worldwide as judged in THN's Future Watch 2010. He's played in the northeast (Rochester, and now Utica), he's played in the southeast (Florida), he's played in the southwest (San Antonio) and he's played in the northwest (Vancouver).

Yes, Markstrom has come a long way – geographically speaking.

It wasn't supposed to take this

JACOB MARKSTROM



POSITION
Goalie

AGE 25
HEIGHT 6-6
WEIGHT 200 lbs

DRAFTED
Florida, 31st in
2008

MAKING HIS MARK

After leading Utica to the Calder Cup final, Markstrom is penciled into Vancouver's NHL roster.

long for Markstrom to make a name for himself.

The 25-year-old stopper has had a spotlight on him since the Florida Panthers selected him 31st overall in 2008. He was ranked No. 3 in Future Watch 2009, then second the next year, then eighth, then eighth again, then down to 30th, then theoretically in the NHL for good in 2013-14, then back in at 56th in this year's edition. Markstrom became the perennial prospect who wouldn't go away.

But that's often how it is for goalies. They take longer to develop. For every Carey Price or Roberto Luongo, who make it to the big league out of junior, there are many more like Ben Bishop (seven years after being drafted), Corey Crawford (seven years), Cory Schneider (six years), Henrik Lundqvist (five years), Pekka Rinne (four years) who need time to become regulars.

The 2015-16 season will be seven years post draft for Markstrom. He has seemingly made the NHL in Vancouver after the Canucks traded Eddie Lack in the off-season to make room for him behind starter Ryan Miller. Ideally, Markstrom will take over as the starter by the time Miller's deal expires in 2017.

Canucks GM Jim Benning was convinced of Markstrom's readiness after he led the Utica Comets to the Calder Cup final in the AHL this past season. Despite Markstrom's best efforts, the Comets fell to the Manchester Monarchs in five games.

He had a sensational regular season – 1.88 goals-against average, .934 save percent, five shutouts – and was just as good in the playoffs. "He's good at what he does," Utica

coach Travis Green said. "What I like about him is his demeanor. He's learned to not get too high or too low. It comes with believing in himself. If he has a bad game, I'm sure he's coming back with a good game."

Markstrom grew up in the home city of several Swedish players, including Washington's Nicklas Backstrom and his Comets backup and boyhood rival, Joacim Eriksson. His mother is a kindergarten teacher, his father is a janitor and soccer coach, and Markstrom was a soccer goalie himself. By his early teens, he gave up the big net for the small one.

The scouting report on Markstrom in his draft year read like this: "An interesting raw talent who combines athletic ability with good technique and positioning."

But he needed to get to another level. He worked hard this past season on tracking the puck and closing the open space between the moving disc, the net and the shooter's eyes. Goalie coaches Rolie Melanson and Dan Cloutier were key to Markstrom's resurgence. "They're unbelievable," Markstrom said. "I try to use my size (6-foot-6), cover as much net as you can. But you open bigger holes when you move. Anticipation and tracking the puck is the huge thing."

Although he's played on big stages and lived in some big towns, Markstrom has enjoyed his time in the Mohawk Valley. "As a player, what matters is the atmosphere at the rink," he said. "Utica has been unbelievable. The locker rooms, training rooms, the staff."

And the notoriously wild crowd at 3,835-seat Utica Memorial Auditorium? "The fans have been out of this world," he said. "When you think it is as loud as it can be, it gets louder. It pushes you to perform well. The fans help you put out that extra 10 percent." **THN**

83

Wins for Markstrom with three teams (Rochester, San Antonio, Utica) the past five seasons in the AHL. He's also managed 50 NHL games during various recalls, winning 11 with Florida and two with Vancouver.



ALL'S THAWING ON RUSSIAN FRONT

NHL teams are warming up again to Russian players as the threat to bail and go home softens

EVER SINCE THE KHL STARTED UP IN 2008, the Russian league has scored several victories in bringing home players who had sought glory in the NHL, from Ilya Kovalchuk to Alexander Radulov. Not coincidentally, the opportunity for young Russians to stay home in a familiar culture, play good hockey and make more money earlier in their careers had given rise to the "Russian factor" at the NHL draft. Players from the big hockey nation were falling because franchises were afraid they wouldn't come over – and if they did, the players might head back when times got tough.

But the Russians made a comeback at the 2015 draft, with four players going in the first round. That's the most since 2001, when a class led by Kovalchuk went four deep. Two of this year's prospects had already come to North America to play major junior, providing assurance they like it here. Defenseman Ivan Provorov went seventh overall to Philadelphia, while the Red Wings snapped up Evgeny Svechnikov at No. 19.

But for the second time in three drafts, the Dallas Stars took a Russian who was

playing back home in the top 15 picks. In 2013, Valeri Nichushkin went 10th overall and immediately headed to Texas, where his NHL career began as an 18-year-old. This time, it was the big and skilled right winger Denis Gurianov, taken 12th overall in a bit of shocker. "Some people like certain North American players, some like other European players," said Stars GM Jim Nill. "In the end, my

“ MY PHILOSOPHY HAS BEEN WIDE OPEN. I DON'T CARE WHERE THEY COME FROM. I JUST WANT THE BEST PLAYER – Jim Nill

philosophy has always been wide open. I don't care where they come from. I just want the best player.”

Gurianov doesn't know a lot about Dallas ("It's pretty hot there and is a nice city, that's pretty much it," he said through a translator), but he's excited to come over and is re-negotiating his

RUSSIA REVIVAL

Has the KHL scare come and gone? Gurianov was one of four Russians drafted by NHL teams in Round 1.

contract with KHL Lada Togliatti so he'd be allowed to leave after next season instead of the season after. Either way, the Stars are happy with their selection. "He's going back next year – we knew that all along, he has a contract," Nill said. "But we were looking for the best player available, and that's three, four years down the road. We're comfortable he's going to be over here playing for us."

The 13 Russians drafted in Florida were the most since 2004 – a class headlined by Alex Ovechkin and Evgeni Malkin. The fact even Columbus, a franchise that had been scorched by high-profile Russian picks in the past (Nikita Filatov and Nikolay Zherdev), took defenseman Vladislav Gavrikov indicates the cold war of drafting has really thawed.

Perhaps it's no surprise this is happening during a time the KHL appears to be flagging. Folding franchises, stories of players not getting paid for months and the fact one team had to stop playing due to a military incursion (Ukraine's Donbass Donetsk) don't help the KHL's profile. And with talk about NHL expansion, the best league in the world could be getting bigger, meaning more job opportunities.

What's also interesting is Russian kids are coming to North America in their early teens now, even before major junior: Provorov played bantam and midget for the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton Knights, a program that has attracted international talent recently (Pittsburgh pick Daniel Sprong of Holland was a teammate). And Nikita Korostelev, who fell to the Toronto Maple Leafs in the seventh round due to skating concerns, played two years in that city's midget

ranks before going to OHL Sarnia.

Beating the language barrier early on is one way to get acclimatized in North America and can't hurt players pursuing dreams of playing in the NHL. But if this year was any indication, being the best player on the board will once again be the only factor in getting selected. **THE**



FIERY PHIL VS. GUMP

Legendary netminder Worsley battled over booze and bellies with coach Watson during their openly hostile Rangers relationship

IF THERE WAS ONE MUTUAL HOCKEY HATE THAT NEVER DIMINISHED over time, it featured an English-Canadian goalie named Lorne 'Gump' Worsley and a French-Canadian coach, Philippe Henri 'Fiery Phil' Watson. The minuscule netminder got his nickname because he closely resembled a popular comics page character named Andy Gump. Watson's moniker also was well earned because of his temper.

The seeds of their eternal enmity were planted by Watson after Worsley – then a glistening Rangers prospect – was invited to the Blueshirts training camp in 1949. The very first Watson-Worsley bout curiously was an unexpected liquor-drinking event. "Phil pulled out a jug," Gump remembered, "and said, 'I hear you're supposed to be quite a drinker. Let's see if you can drink me under the table.' We matched slug for slug and, finally, Watson wound up under the table."

Watson, who became coach of the AA New York Rovers – with

BELLY ACHING

Worsley's drinking and resulting physique drove coach Watson to slam him in the press after games.

Gump as his goalie – should have known better. As Worsley noted in his autobiography, *They Call Me Gump*, "I got caught up in the city's fast life and almost ruined my career. We ran from bar to bar in those days – and you know how many bars there are in New York. About 10,000. After most games, we'd go out drinking and stay until the joints closed at four in the morning. We were young and figured we could get away with it."

Hangovers notwithstanding, Worsley did get away with it. From the Rovers, he eventually moved on to the Rangers and won the Calder Trophy as a rookie in 1952-53. All was copacetic until Watson became Rangers coach in 1955, and the blood feud resumed. One night after Gump won a big game and was sitting at his locker, Watson yelled across the room, "Worsley, you think you're a hot s--- now. YOU STINK."

Gump did suffer a stinker of a game from time to time. Even he admitted that. Exhibit A took place on the night a lowly Blackhawks team rallied from a two-goal deficit to tie New York 6-6 at The Garden. Chicago's hero was a normally light-scoring forward named Hec Lalande who delivered a hat trick. Infuriated, Watson marched into the dressing room like a drill sergeant and told newsmen, "When a dopey Frenchman like Lalande scores three goals in one game, how good can our goalie be?"

Adding insult to insult, Watson further stung Worsley: "We can't win games with a goalie who has a beer-barrel belly." Upon hearing that, reporters sped to Gump's stall and brought-up the coach's put-down. With a knowing chuckle, Gump shot back, "Shows you what a dope we have for a coach – beer is the poor man's champagne. I only drink Johnny Walker Red."

Watson once threatened to fine any player he caught boozing in the vicinity of Madison Square Garden. Did Worsley worry? Never. Right after Phil's dressing room harangue, Gump grabbed the Rangers practice goalie, Joe Schaefer, by the hand and escorted him to the 322 Club, a tavern across from The Garden.

"We can't go in there," Schaefer protested, "Watson is sure to spot us." Not to worry, assured Gump. "Phil's so dumb he'll never think to look in here." Phil didn't, but on other occasions his revenge was harsh and often untimely. After a home loss to Montreal, he entered the dressing room and screamed, "Nobody take off your uniform. We're going back on that ice to do a little skating."

Worsley: "Some reporters still in the press box writing their stories couldn't believe it. No coach had ever done such a thing. Up and down the ice, he had the guys skating; then side to side. Not long after that we went into one of the worst tailspins in history and, on the final night of 1958-59, we missed the playoffs."

Early in the 1959-60 season the feudists went at it again and, this time, Worsley delivered his KO to end all verbal knockouts: "I was here, Phil, when you came, and I'll be here when you're gone." As it happened Watson was fired in November 1959, replaced by Alf Pike. Meanwhile, The Gump slumped, and eventually was traded to Montreal, winning his first Stanley Cup in 1965. As for Watson, he was hired as coach by the Bruins, failed in Boston and ultimately disappeared over the hockey horizon.

Shortly after the Habs' 1965 Cup win, Gump was personally feted near his home in Beloeil, Que. "They held a parade in my honor," Worsley recalled. "Out came the town's only fire truck and police car, all scrubbed and polished."

"And as I rode down Laurier Boulevard in a convertible – proud as hell – I was mumbling away, 'If Phil Watson could only see me now!'" **— GUMP**

Guess WHO!



"I was the third U.S.-born NHLer to score 500 goals and finished my career with 513."

"I had three straight 100-point seasons from 1991-92 to 1993-94 with Chicago."

"My video game avatar was so famous it was featured in the 1996 film *Swingers*."

Separated AT BIRTH



ALEXANDER SEMIN

Uses a laser-like shot. Flying solo in offensive zone led to death of his stardom. His one fight was a joke.



MARK HAMILL

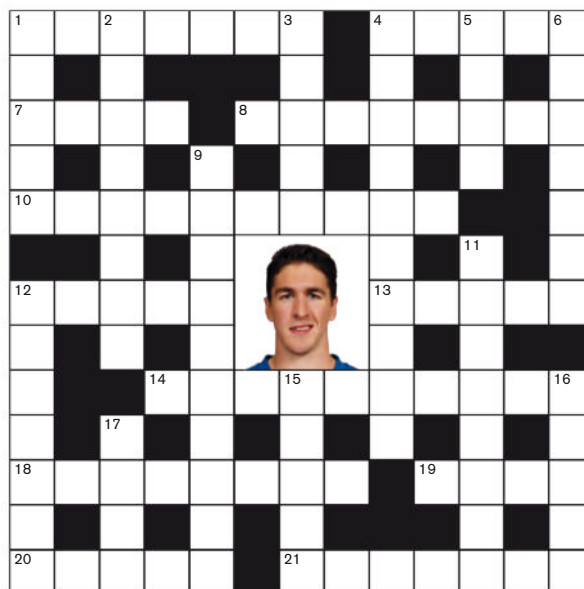
Uses a lightsaber. Flew with Han Solo into the Death Star. Fights Batman as voice of the Joker.

Email your suggestions to sab@thehockeynews.com

WHO AM I: JEREMY ROENICK

CROSSWORD

By Larry Humber



ANSWERS AVAILABLE IN THE NEXT ISSUE AND AT THN.com/XWORD

LAST ISSUE'S CROSSWORD SOLUTION ACROSS 1. SECURES, 4. HITCH, 7. CUPS, 8. BENCHING, 10. OUTFIELDER, 12. AD-LIB, 13. NONIS, 14. ANDREW LADD, 18. ORIGINAL, 19. PAIR, 20. STING, 21. SETBACK
DOWN 1. SACCO, 2. CAPITALS, 3. STEEL, 4. HOCKEY NEWS, 5. TAIL, 6. HIGGINS, 9. JIM BENNING, 11. IN CANADA, 12. ART ROSS, 15. READS, 16. DEREK, 17. GIGI

ACROSS

- 1 Brief break in play
- 4 Home of hockey's Lightning
- 7 Flames once played in Atlanta's ___ Coliseum
- 8 Pat Burns in Hall of Fame in the ___ category
- 10 Detroit's most recent Smythe Trophy winner
- 12 Rabid Leaf fan Mike Myers is also known for this role
- 13 Edmonton's Yakupov, and namesakes
- 14 Indoor rinks have ___ ice
- 18 Rangers captain Ryan ___, pictured
- 19 Retired linesman Ron ___ or a Scandinavian
- 20 Darnell ___ went No. 7 overall at 2013 draft
- 21 NHL teams played just this many games before expansion

DOWN

- 1 Barry ___ is now coach in Washington
- 2 Nickname of Lake Erie's AHL team
- 3 Digit that requires extra padding
- 4 He's at right wing in Buffalo
- 5 Travis ___ is with Dallas
- 6 Grant Fuhr racked up a remarkable 14 in 1983-84
- 9 He's between the pipes in Nashville
- 11 The Metropolitan is one
- 12 Greg ___ was GM in Colorado
- 15 Former Leaf and Blue Hammarstrom, and namesakes
- 16 Dallas coach ___ Ruff
- 17 First Nigerian-born NHLer

Behind THE MASK



COREY CRAWFORD | CHICAGO BLACKHAWKS

Crawford's artist, David Arrigo, is a devout supporter of the armed forces. This lid symbolizes all four branches of the U.S. military, with a nod to Canada on the top. It was worn March 27 and auctioned off, with proceeds going to the Clint Reif Memorial Fund. — **MATT LARKIN**



COLORADO/ARIZONA | 2015-16 Jersey HOUND

Going off the board this issue by focusing on two new shoulder patches instead of the jerseys themselves.

The Coyotes and Avalanche have new secondary marks for the upcoming season, with the Avs celebrating their 20th anniversary in the state and the Yotes drawing attention to the fact they're from Arizona, not Phoenix.

Colorado's crest is a shoutout to the state flag (remember the old Rockies logo?) and looks great in those colors, while Arizona's take on the paw motif is cool and unique. — **RYAN KENNEDY**



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THE SHARKS CIRCLE BACK

With the acquisitions of Jones, Martin and Ward, San Jose just might have re-found its way

PETE DEBOER &
DOUG WILSON



IT'S FUNNY HOW QUICKLY THINGS CAN change. Not long ago, the state of California was considered the NHL's Death Valley, the road swing you began to dread as soon as you took a peek at the schedule. For a while, it looked as though the Stanley Cup might not apply for permanent residence there, but it was about to accept a job at In-N-Out and take out earthquake insurance.

Then came the 2014-15 season. Two of the three teams didn't make the playoffs and the Anaheim Ducks couldn't close out a crucial series or win a Game 7 on home ice. All of a sudden, Cali didn't look quite so imposing.

There are going to be a lot of compelling teams this coming season. The Buffalo Sabres and Edmonton Oilers will be fun to watch. It will be fascinating to see if the Toronto Maple Leafs self-started tire fire will burn brightly. The Calgary Flames look jacked, the Columbus Blue Jackets made some assertive moves and it will be curious to see if the Pittsburgh Penguins can score themselves out of every one of their defects.

You can add the San Jose Sharks to that group. With a few bold moves by a GM who came out swinging to keep his job, the Sharks hit the reset button after missing the post-season by eight points and looking uninspired in doing so. But Doug Wilson moved decisively in the off-season to give his team a makeover that put to rest any notion of a rebuild and steered a course toward contender status.

After Day 2 of the draft, Wilson stood along the rail that separates the draft floor from the media and answered questions about how he had failed to improve his roster. The Sharks had nine picks in the draft and traded up to get Jeremy Roy with first pick of the second round, a player many outlets had rated in the first round. (THN's Draft Preview had him pegged at No. 26.) But people

who saw the Los Angeles Kings add Milan Lucic wondered why the Sharks had been incapable of swinging a deal on the draft floor. "We've done this many different ways," Wilson said at the time.

Then he swung into action, acquiring goalie Martin Jones from Boston for a first-round pick and a prospect, in effect getting a goalie from a divisional contender that had no interest in dealing him to a Pacific Division foe. And shortly after free agency opened, he signed defenseman Paul Martin to a four-year deal and winger Joel Ward to a three-year deal for reasonable money. Suddenly, new coach Peter DeBoer had a roster that was much more to his liking.

By acquiring Martin, the Sharks got a left-shot D-man who can take care of things in his own end to give Brent Burns freedom to roam. And it gives the Sharks a top-six D-corps consisting of Martin and Burns, followed by Marc-Edouard Vlasic with Justin Braun and a third pairing of Mirco Mueller and Brenden Dillon.

One problem the Sharks had as they tried to rebuild on the fly this past season was their young forwards didn't take a large enough step in their development. So Wilson got Ward, a battle-tested veteran who gives the Sharks size, a modicum of skill and some big-game results. Ward immediately pushes some of those younger forwards a spot down the depth chart, taking away the pressure and adding to the team's top two lines. He gives them the kind of big presence that's needed in the West and a large target in front of the net for Joe Thornton.

And one of the trades the Sharks made at the draft went under the radar, but tuck this one away for future reference. The Sharks acquired a 23-year-old defenseman named Patrick McNally from Vancouver for a seventh-round pick. McNally played out his four years at Harvard University and was ambivalent

**“
WILSON MOVED
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about signing with the Canucks, so the Sharks took advantage. McNally's career at Harvard was not without controversy. He missed much of 2012-13 because of a cheating scandal and played 21 games this past season because of a knee injury that was originally misdiagnosed. But he did manage 21 points in his senior year and his team had a habit of winning when he was in the lineup. He probably won't make the Sharks right away, but he'll be a player to watch.

So, with a new coach, a new goalie and two pivotal skater additions, what's in store for San Jose? Well, much will depend on Jones, who has just 34 NHL games on his resume and has played behind a defensive juggernaut. How Jones responds to being given the role of No. 1 goalie will be pivotal to the team's fortunes. Jonathan Bernier is another goalie who played behind Jonathan Quick and pined for that chance and two years later, the jury is still out on whether or not he's a bona fide No. 1 goalie.

Will the Sharks be better in 2015-16? Almost certainly. Will they be good enough to be a contender in the Western Conference? They hope so. Will they be a fascinating team to watch as the season unfolds? You bet, they will. **THN**

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